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MAR 21 2002

ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER

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U.S. APPLICATION NO. (If known, see 37 CFR 1.5)

10/088682
Not yet assigned**TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES
DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US)
CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 371**INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO
PCT/DE00/03207INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE
September 14, 2000

PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED

September 21, 1999

TITLE OF INVENTION

COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM AND METHOD

APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US

Antonius EMMERINK et al.

Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information:

1. This is a **FIRST** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
2. This is a **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
3. This is an express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)). The submission must include items (5), (6), (9) and (21) indicated below.
4. The US has been elected by the expiration of 19 months from the priority date (PCT Article 31).
5. A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2))
 - a. is attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau)
 - b. has been communicated by the International Bureau.
 - c. is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US).
6. An English language translation of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2))
 - a. is attached hereto.
 - b. has been previously submitted under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).
7. Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3))
 - a. are attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau).
 - b. have been communicated by the International Bureau.
 - c. have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired.
 - d. have not been made and will not be made.
8. An English language translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).
9. An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(4)).
10. An English language translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(5)).

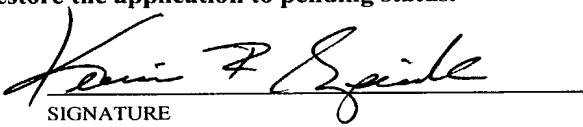
Items 11. to 16. below concern document(s) or information included:

11. An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.
12. An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.
13. A **FIRST** preliminary amendment
14. A **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** preliminary amendment.
15. A substitute specification.
16. A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.
17. A computer-readable form of the sequence listing in accordance with PCT Rule 13ter.2 and 35 U.S.C. 1.821 - 1.825.
18. A second copy of the published international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).
19. A second copy of the English language translation of the international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).
20. Other items: 1) Application Data Sheet; 2) Int'l Search Report; 3) IPER; 4) Return receipt postcard.

CERTIFICATE OF HAND DELIVERY

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being hand filed with the United States Patent and Trademark Office in Washington, D.C. on March 21, 2002.

Melissa Garton

U.S. APPLICATION NO. (if known, see 37 CFR 1.5)	INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO
Not yet assigned 70/088682	PCT/DE00/03207	449122025400
21. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The following fees are submitted:		CALCULATIONS PTO USE ONLY
BASIC NATIONAL FEE (37 CFR 1.492(a)(1)-(5)):		
Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO.....\$1,040.00		
International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but International Search Report prepared by the EPO or JPO\$890.00		
International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO.....\$740.00		
International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO but all claims did not satisfy provision of PCT Article 33(1)-(4)\$710.00		
International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4)\$100.00		
ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT = \$890.00		
Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(e)). \$0		
CLAIMS	NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA
Total claims	- 20 =	x \$18.00 \$0
Independent claims	- 3 =	x \$84.00 \$0
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM(S) (if applicable)		+ \$280.00 \$0
TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS = \$890.00		
<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant claims small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27. The fees indicated above are reduced by ½.		
SUBTOTAL = \$890.00		
Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(f)). + \$0		
TOTAL NATIONAL FEE = \$890.00		
Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31). \$40.00 per property + \$0		
TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED = \$890.00		
		Amount to be refunded: \$
		charged: \$
a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please charge my Deposit Account No. 03-1952 (referencing Docket No. 449122025400) in the amount of \$890.00 to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.		
b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees that may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 (referencing Docket No. 449122025400).		
NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137(a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status.		
SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:		
Kevin R. Spivak Morrison & Foerster LLP 2000 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20006-1888		
 SIGNATURE Kevin R. Spivak Registration No. 43,148		
March 21, 2002		

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Melissa Garton

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In the application of:

Antonius EMMERINK et al.

Serial No.: Not yet assigned

Filing Date: March 21, 2002

For: COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM
AND METHOD

Examiner: Not yet assigned

Group Art Unit: Not yet assigned

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

BOX PCT

Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Prior to examination on the merits, please amend this application as follows:

In the Claims:

What is claimed is:

1. (Amended) A method for setting up and/or clearing down and sustaining a communications link, comprising:

 providing a communications link between at least two local devices in a transport network by local switching centers associated with the local devices;

 controlling the setup and/or clear-down of the communications link by a central control device via a control network;

 controlling the connection setup and/or clear-down in the transport network using at least two control information items;

 using a connection information item defining a timeslot connection via a switching matrix representing a first control information item; and

providing a protocol information item representing a second control information item for the central control device and/or for the local devices to select communications protocols to be used and useable transport media.

3. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the communications link comprises at least two connection elements in the transport network, where each connection element uses at least one respective communications protocol whose layer structure differs in at least one layer and in which the control information item is complemented by an information item which identifies a conversion apparatus for the various communications protocols.

4. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the communications link comprises at least two connection elements in the transport network, where each connection element uses at least one respective communications protocol whose layer structure differs in at least one layer and in which the control information item is complemented by an information item which identifies a media access device for a respective communication medium.

5. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, in which an information item is provided centrally to complement the control information item in the area of the central control device.

6. (Amended) The method as claimed in claims 4, in which an information item is provided locally to complement the control information item and is ascertained at least once by the central control device in the course of the handling of a communications link.

7. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 3, in which connection elements between local devices in the transport network use the Internet Protocol for transmission, and in which connection control is effected by assigning to an IP address one PCM data-stream subscriber line and a local device.

8. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, in which control information checks whether a connection setup via the transport network is necessary, and provides the connection elsewhere.

9. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 8, in which the control information item used is at least one address for a local device, and if the communications link relates to communications terminals which are connected to the same local device, a connection is set up without the communications data being converted on a transport-network-specific basis.

10. (Amended) An arrangement for setting up and/or clearing down, and sustaining, a communications link, comprising:

- a transport network to provide a communications link;
- a control network to control the setup and/or clear-down of the communications link;
- a first device to control the connection setup and/or clear-down in the transport network via the control network, the device configured with a physical separation from the transport network, which output at least two control information items,

- and in which the transport network has at least two local devices to output and receive communications data; and

- a switching center to provide a communications link in the transport network, where at least one connection element of the communications link is in the form of a connection which uses the Internet Protocol as communications protocol.

11. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 10, in which the control network has a central device and is operatively connected to a second device to provide transport-network-specific protocol information and/or transport network media information.

12. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 11, in which the second device is arranged centrally in the area of the first device.

13. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 11, in which the second device is arranged locally in the area of the local device.

14. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 10, in which a local device has at least one conversion device in the form of a gateway to convert a TDM protocol into an IP protocol.

15. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 10, in which the local device has at least one network access device to an Ethernet, in the form of a transceiver.

16. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 10, in which a local device has at least a first device to address evaluation of addresses for local devices which output a first signal when a communications link relates to a single central device.

17. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 16, in which the first signal is output to a device to access timeslots in the TDM data stream from the local device, and the local device shorts the connection in the TDM data stream in response to the reception of the signal.

18. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 17, in which the connection is shorted by interchanging the reading and writing directions.

19. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 10, in which the local device is in the form of an integrated communications terminal.

20. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 19, in which the integrated communications terminal is in the form of a telephone.

21. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 19, in which the communications terminal is in the form of a personal computer.

In the Abstract:

Please replace the Abstract with the substitute Abstract attached hereto.

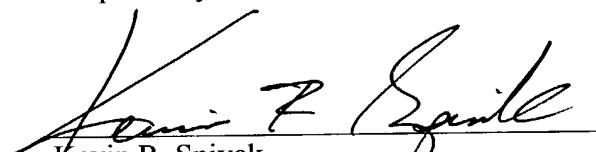
REMARKS

Amendments to the specification have been made and are submitted herewith in the attached Substitute Specification. A clean copy of the specification and a marked-up version showing the changes made are attached herewith. The claims and abstract have been amended in the attached Preliminary Amendment. All amendments have been made to place the application in proper U.S. format and to conform with proper grammatical and idiomatic English. None of the amendments herein are made for reasons related to patentability. No new matter has been added.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made".

In the unlikely event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 449122025400. However, the Commissioner is not authorized to charge the cost of the issue fee to the Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin R. Spivak
Registration No. 43,148

Dated: March 21, 2002

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

For the convenience of the Examiner, the changes made are shown below with deleted text in strikethrough and added text in underline.

In the Claims:

Patent Claims

What is claimed is:

1. (Amended) A method for setting up and/or clearing down and sustaining a communications link, ~~in which comprising:~~

providing a communications link between at least two local devices (~~DZ10-DZ40~~) is provided in a transport network (~~71030, 72030, 72040, 73020~~) by local switching centers (~~CS10-CS40~~) associated with the local devices(~~DZ10-DZ40~~);

controlling the setup and/or clear-down of the communications link ~~is controlled~~ by a central control device via a control network(~~310, 410, STN~~);

controlling the connection setup and/or clear-down in the transport network ~~is controlled~~ using at least two control information items; ;

using a connection information item suitable for defining a timeslot connection via a switching matrix ~~represents~~ representing a first control information item; and,

providing a protocol information item ~~represents~~ representing a second control information item ~~and is provided~~ for the central control device and/or for the local devices (~~DZ10-DZ40~~) for the purposes of selecting to select communications protocols to be used and useable transport media.

3. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the one of the preceding claims,

~~for a communications link comprising~~ comprises at least two connection elements (~~73020, 72030~~) in the transport network, where each connection element uses at least one respective communications protocol whose layer structure differs in at least one layer and in which the control information item is complemented by an information item which identifies a conversion apparatus (~~U20, U2030, U30, 3020~~) for the various communications protocols.

4. (Amended) The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims claim 1, wherein
the communications link comprising comprises at least two connection elements in the transport network, where each connection element uses at least one respective communications protocol whose layer structure differs in at least one layer and in which the control information item is complemented by an information item which identifies a media access device (CS10, Cs30) for a respective communication medium.

5. (Amended) The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims claim 1, in which an information item is provided centrally ~~for the purposes of complementing to complement~~ the control information item in the area of the central control device(ZE1, ZE2, ZE100).

6. (Amended) The method as claimed in one of claims 4 to 6,
in which an information item is provided locally ~~for the purposes of complementing to~~
complement the control information item and is ascertained at least once by the central control device (ZE1, ZE2, ZE100) in the course of the handling of a communications link(71030, 72030, 73020, 72040).:

7. (Amended) The method as claimed in one of claims 3 to 5 claim 3, in which connection elements between local devices (DZ10,...,DZ40) in the transport network use the Internet Protocol for transmission, and in which connection control is effected by assigning to an IP address precisely one PCM data-stream subscriber line (KE) and a local device(DZ).

8. (Amended) The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims claim 1,
in which control information is used to checks whether a connection setup via the transport network (72040) is necessary, and if not, provides the connection is provided elsewhere.

9. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 8, in which the control information item used is at least one address for a local device(DZ), and if the communications link relates to communications terminals (KE) which are connected to the same local device(DZ), a connection is set up without the communications data being converted on a transport-network-specific basis.

10. (Amended) An arrangement for setting up and/or clearing down, and sustaining, a communications link, comprising:

a) ~~which has a transport network (71030, 72030, 72040, 73020) for providing to provide~~ a communications link;

b) ~~which has~~

a control network (310, 410, STN) for controlling to control the setup and/or clear-down of the communications link and ~~which has~~:

~~a first means for controlling device to control~~ the connection setup and/or clear-down in the transport network via the control network, ~~these means being arranged the device configured~~ with a physical separation from the transport network, which output at least two control information items,

and in which the transport network has at least two local devices (DZ10, DZ20..., DZ40) ~~for outputting and receiving communications data, and in the area of the local device has a switching center (CS) for providing to output and receive communications data; and~~

a switching center to provide a communications link in the transport network, where at least one connection element (71030, 72030) of the communications link is in the form of a connection which uses the Internet Protocol as communications protocol.

11. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 10, in which the control network (310, 410, STN) has a central device (ZE) ~~for control purposes and is operatively connected to second means at least for the purposes of providing a second device to provide~~ transport-network-specific protocol information and/or transport network media information.

12. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 11, in which the second ~~means are~~ device is arranged centrally in the area of the first ~~means~~ device.

13. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 11, in which the second ~~means are~~ device is arranged locally in the area of the local device(DZ).

14. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in ~~one of claims 10 to 13~~ claim 10,

in which a local device (DZ) has at least one conversion device (U1030, U30) in the form of a gateway ~~for converting to convert~~ a TDM protocol into an IP protocol.

15. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in ~~one of claims 10 to 14~~ **claim 10**, in which the local device has at least one network access device to an Ethernet, in the form of a transceiver.

16. (Amended) **The arrangement as claimed in one of claims 10 to 14 claim 10**, in which a local device (DZ) has at least ~~a~~ first means for ~~device to~~ address evaluation of addresses for local devices (DZ) which output a first signal when a communications link (2050, 2060, 2070) relates only to a single central device(DZ).

17. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 16, in which the first signal is output to a device ~~for accessing to access~~ timeslots in the TDM data stream (302) from the local device, and the latter ~~local device~~ shorts the connection in the TDM data stream (302) in response to the reception of the signal.

18. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 17, in which the connection is shorted by interchanging the reading and writing directions.

19. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in ~~one of claims 10 to 15~~ **claim 10**, in which the local device is in the form of an integrated communications terminal(~~KE10..., KE40~~).

20. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 19, in which the integrated communications terminal is in the form of a telephone(~~KE30~~).

21. (Amended) The arrangement as claimed in claim 19, in which the communications terminal is in the form of a personal computer(~~KE10, KE20, KE40~~).

In the Abstract:

Please replace the Abstract with the substitute Abstract attached hereto.

COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

Abstract

The invention describes a method and an arrangement for actuating and operating a heterogeneous transport network which comprises connection elements, such as ATM and Ethernet connections, by controlling a TDM-based switching system. In the area of the transport network, there are gateways and routers which are actuated by the central control device for the purposes of setting up and clearing down a connection. Information relating to the accessibility of specific communications subscribers by means of communication medium and communications protocol is either stored in the area of a central control mechanism or is available locally in the area of local access devices for subscriber terminals. The invention also specifies integrated terminals for Internet telephony which are likewise able to be actuated by means of a TDM-based control mechanism. The invention specifies a simple method and a simple arrangement which allow very heterogeneous communications infrastructures to be provided which have the advantage that they behave like a single private branch exchange and work together with normal control mechanisms. One advantageous refinement produces local connections without burdening transport-network-specific devices.

COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM AND METHOD

CLAIM FOR PRIORITY

5 This application claims priority to International Application No. PCT/DE00/03207 which was published in the German language on September 14, 2000.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

10 The invention relates to a method and an arrangement for setting up and clearing down, and sustaining, communications links, and in particular, within the context of a private branch exchange and terminals which are to be connected.

15

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The rising volume of communication, as a result of an increasing number of communications subscribers and rising demands on the volume of data to be transmitted, 20 places greater and greater demands on switching centers, in particular on private branch exchanges, with regard to the volume of data to be transmitted for each communications link and the number of communications terminals which are to be connected to 25 one another.

Current devices are based, by way of example, on the TDM method (Time Division Multiplexing), in which communications data on different connections are 30 transmitted in respectively defined timeslots. A connection between different communication parties is set up by a switching matrix which assigns incoming timeslots on an incoming connection outgoing timeslots to an outgoing connection on the basis of a control 35 information item. Such switching matrices are generally of fixed proportions and can set up only a defined number of connections, which often makes it difficult to match exchanges to requirements. Another problem with such devices is that the timeslots are able to

hold only a limited amount of data.

On account of different strengths and weaknesses of networks when transporting voice and data in the local
5 domain, various communications networks have become established for specific purposes of use.

Figure 1 shows an example of a known private branch exchange 150 with two peripheral devices P1 and P2 to which a communications terminal KE1 and KE2 operating on a digital or analog basis is respectively connected. These peripheral devices P1 and P2 are accommodated in the same physical area as the central device ZE1. By way of example, they are in the same room or in the
15 same cabinet as it. The terminals occupy defined timeslots in the PCM data stream (Pulse Code Modulation) with communication data. The digital or analog communications terminals KE1 and KE2 are respectively connected to subscriber line modules SLMO1 and SLMO2 which supply or take digital data, intended for the respective terminals or coming from the respective terminals, to/from the PCM data stream using
20 timeslots stipulated by signaling. These PCM data streams are denoted by 100 and 200 in figure 1. In addition, signaling connections are shown which are represented by 110 and 210. It should be noted that
25 these involve a logical representation and not a physical representation. In reality, however, the transport data and the signaling data are transmitted
30 in the same connecting cable.

This figure also shows peripheral devices P1 and P2 and supply modules LTUC1 and LTUC2 which regulate the data traffic to the subscriber line modules of the
35 respective peripheral devices. The peripheral device P1 is supplied with signaling data via the line 110, and the peripheral device P2 is supplied with signaling data via the signaling line 210.

As can clearly be seen here, this arrangement involves both the information to be transported and the signaling information being supplied to a central device ZE1. In this context, a messaging device DCL 5 collects and distributes messages 2 which are interchanged between the central device ZE1 and the peripheral devices P1, P2. The call processing section CP controls the setup and clear-down of connections and, to this end, uses equipment-specific interface 10 functions DH, inter alia, which are in the form of program modules, for example. This involves producing setting instructions 1 for the switching matrix MTS. These setting instructions essentially indicate which input of the switching matrix is to be connected to 15 which output in order to provide a communications link. Control and connection functions are thus performed by a single physically incorporated functional unit in the communications network.

Problems arise with such configurations because the data to be transported need to be supplied to the central device ZE1. This is the case even if, by way of example, two communications terminals which are connected to the same peripheral device P1 need to 20 communicate with one another. The wiring complexity required for such devices increases with increasing distance between the terminals and the central device ZE1, which means that this type of arrangement restricts the extent of a private branch exchange or 25 makes installation much more expensive when covering 30 relatively large areas.

In such devices, problems likewise arise with regard to modular extendibility both in terms of the number of 35 connections and in terms of the volume of data to be transmitted. This type of embodiment does not allow different data rates for each individual communications link.

Alignment and/or transparent integration of different network infrastructures is likewise not possible.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 The invention specifies a method and an arrangement for providing a communications link which ensure a high level of flexibility in terms of matching to network infrastructures and in terms of the physical extent thereof.

10 One advantage of the invention is the operation of a heterogeneous communications network using a joint control mechanism, because information about the type of protocol which can be used to reach respective

15 subscribers is held in the area of the central control mechanism, or in the transport network. Advantageously, the topology of the transport network can differ from that of the control network in this context. This makes it possible to set up a communications link while

20 avoiding numerous diverse conversion procedures which would be necessary on a previously stipulated path between the subscribers. This advantageously takes account of the fact that the subscribers communicate using different communications protocols, with local

25 matching to the required communications protocol, as opposed to central matching, allowing the communications path to be routed via a minimal number of conversion devices, which protects the resources in the network and keeps down the length of the

30 communications paths in the transport network.

In one embodiment of the invention, the method described provides not only the protocol information item but also a media information item relating to the

35 transport network, because this makes it possible to take into account the characteristic of different transmission media in terms of transport quality, utilization and speed when controlling the connection setup.

In another embodiment of the invention, the method described allows the different protocol structure of communications protocols handled on a single medium or on different media to be taken into account by

5 actuating suitable protocol conversion units, associated with communications subscribers which are involved, in an appropriately defined manner when setting up and sustaining the connection.

10 In still another embodiment of the invention, the method described allows a defined media access device to be actuated for a particular communications subscriber. If a plurality of transport media are available for each communications subscriber, this

15 advantageously allows them to be specifically taken into account and actuated when a connection is set up.

In another embodiment of the invention, the method described allows the information required for

20 controlling the transport network to be set up and/or provided centrally, because the problem of updating, maintaining and saving these data is then limited to the maintenance of a central database.

25 Advantageously, one aspect of the method described affords the opportunity for required control information to be provided locally in the transport network and for the control mechanism to request it when a connection is set up, because this allows local

30 measures for aligning the transport network to be taken without such measures affecting the entire transport network and a central control mechanism.

Advantageously, in another aspect of the method described, in which the transport network provided is a

35 network to which information is transmitted on the basis of the Internet Protocol, a local device is controlled by assigning to an IP address precisely one

PCM data-stream subscriber line and an entire local device, because this allows IP subscribers to be managed and controlled using control mechanisms which likewise actuate TDM-based communications devices,
5 without the additional need for a high level of development complexity in order to match these devices to IP-based terminals. This allows existing conventional telephone installations also to be used for IP telephony, for example, where conventional
10 telephone installations provide a large quantity of service features, or else makes it possible to control data links to a telephone installation and thus to enhance them with service features.

15 One advantage of the method described is that the setup of a direct connection between communications terminals relieves the burden on transport-network-specific devices, such as the local switching centers and the conversion devices required for the otherwise necessary
20 data conversion. This makes it possible to increase the performance of the transport network.

In another embodiment of the invention, there is an arrangement for setting up/clearing down and/or sustaining a communications link has means which output at least two control information items to two local devices in the transport network if at least one connection element between these local devices is affected, because this provides a configuration for
25 controlling heterogeneous transport networks which involves transmitting connection information, which is suitable for controlling TDM links, together with the required protocol information item to the local devices affected by the connection setup/clear-down and/or
30 sustenance. Particularly advantageously, one such arrangement likewise allows operation of a mixed infrastructure comprising TDM-based switching centers and IP-based local area networks.

In another embodiment of the invention, there is an arrangement having a central control device which provides transport-network-specific media information or protocol information and makes it available for 5 connection setup. This ensures, in connection with an existing TDM-based communications infrastructure, that the available central database, possibly service feature implementation and application interface, can continue to be used and need be extended only by the 10 protocol- and media-specific information for operating mixed infrastructures.

Compared with the central solution, local provision of the complementary control information required has the 15 advantage that configuration changes affect local areas of local devices and not the entire transport network, which means that a more flexible device is produced in which the respective current stock of control information is requested for connection setup before 20 central control of the transport network when a connection is being set up.

In one aspect of the arrangement, there is a gateway for converting a TDM protocol into the Internet 25 Protocol, because such a gateway can connect TDM-based units to a transport network on which the Internet Protocol is handled.

In another aspect of the arrangement, there is a 30 checking device for checking protocol-specific information for the address of a local device, because this makes it possible to ensure that there is no need for a procedure for converting the communication data into transport-network-specific communication data for 35 communications links between communications terminals associated with a single local device. Advantageously, there is therefore no delay as a result of conversion and no loss of data as a result of conversion methods which may not be loss free.

In still another aspect of the arrangement, there is a mechanism which can produce a short circuit within a TDM data stream between two subscribers to be connected, because this allows internal communications links to be set up in a technically elegant fashion without using the local switching center and the conversion device.

Advantageously, an internal connection is set up, in one embodiment of the arrangement described, by interchanging the reading and writing directions of timeslots in a TDM data stream, because this allows a communications link to be produced within a local device in a technically most simple manner.

Advantageously, one embodiment of the arrangement described has an Ethernet access facility, because such a network access facility allows a terminal to access the Ethernet. Such network access cards are available on the market and are a simple and inexpensive solution for producing mixed transport networks with connection elements via the Ethernet.

Particularly advantageously, the devices provided for heterogeneous network operation in local devices are incorporated in specific terminals, because such a terminal can be controlled by a TDM-based control mechanism, customary to date, with equipment-specific stipulation of a single TDM data stream in connection with a single subscriber line and a subscriber line module without any great complexity for aligning control mechanism customary to date.

One particular advantage is that in one embodiment of such arrangements, telephones and personal computers are provided as terminals, because these are the terminals which are used most frequently and direct connection of these units to the Ethernet for voice

communication represents great additional benefit for terminal users if they can be operated by a central control mechanism in conjunction with conventional devices.

5

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Exemplary embodiments of the invention are explained in more detail below with reference to figures.

10 Figure 1 shows a conventional communications arrangement.

Figure 2 shows an example of a novel communications arrangement.

15 Figure 3 shows an example of a message flow in a known switching system.

20 Figure 4 shows an example of a message flow using timeslot-based connection information for the transport network.

25 Figure 5 shows a communications infrastructure in which different communications protocols are used on connection element links.

Figure 6 shows a communications infrastructure using IP-based terminals.

30 Figure 7 shows another exemplary embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

35 Figure 2 shows an example of a flexible arrangement for setting up communications links. By way of example, this arrangement illustrates the structure of a private branch exchange 250.

Equivalent reference symbols in figure 2 denote the same elements of the device as in figure 1. Looking at

figure 2, it is immediately noticeable that the transport of communication data is triggered by the message traffic of the control messages. To this end, a separate transport network 700 and a separate control network 310/410 are provided in this case. This design of an exchange has the advantage that any already existing networks, such as public or private voice and data networks, can be used for the transport network. Only the control network needs to be routed to the central device ZE2 in this case. The use of conversion devices, such as gateways, advantageously makes it possible to operate and control any hybrid configurations.

The digital or analog communications terminals KE1 and KE2 are in this case shown such that they are respectively connected to subscriber line modules SLMO1 and SLMO2. Without limiting the invention, however, such an arrangement can also involve and incorporate terminals which can be connected to the transport network 700 directly, with bypassing or without an SLMO. It is also possible to connect ATM terminals or else IP-based (Internet Protocol) terminals. One example of a possible hybrid configuration is shown in figure 5 and is explained in the associated part of the description. Directly connected terminals are shown in figure 6 and are described by the associated part of the description of the figures.

As will also be recognized, the local devices DZ1 and DZ2 each have local switching centers CS1 and CS2 which, by way of example, can be in the form of Ethernet or ATM access devices.

In the case of mixed transport networks, gateways and routers and also media of any type can be connected to one another as required. The illustration likewise shows that the switching matrix MTS0 is no longer used

for connection tasks. Instead, the transport network performs the connection tasks.

In the present arrangement, the control lines 410 and 5 310 are used to provide at least one respective control information item for the respective local switching centers CS1 and CS2 for the purposes of setting up the communications link, the control information item being derived from a timeslot-based control information item. 10 The information is interchanged using messages. In addition, the figure shows that PCM data are converted into cell data according to the standard of the transport network type 700, such as ATM cell data, on a data link 300 or 400. In this context, it should be 15 noted that the use of an ATM network as transport network serves as an exemplary embodiment. Ethernet networks, other IP connections or even TDM connections are likewise suitable. The selection is dependent on the intended purpose of use and extends to the whole 20 range of available networks and also optical media, both in the narrowband range and in the broadband range.

If appropriate, various transport networks can be 25 provided; in that case, gateways secure the link between the various network sections.

Preferably, the local switching centers CS1 and CS2 perform transport-network-dependent call processing, 30 although this is essentially limited to a basic call functionality. Service features are implemented and provided by the central control mechanism ZE2. Connections between the different local devices are controlled by the central device ZE2 using signaling 35 messages. The advantages of this arrangement are that it has both narrowband capability and broadband capability. It allows the integration of any network types and topologies. In addition, the transport network can be set up both on public networks and on

private networks, or else can comprise a mixture. It is advantageously possible for local devices at a distance without physical limitation to be associated with the central device ZE2, so that powerful devices with a 5 large physical extent can also be provided by such a private branch exchange. The retention of a joint control mechanism means that it is possible to continue to use already existing software with minimal changes. One advantage of such a device 250 over a networked 10 system comprising devices 150 is that the distributed system is a single installation (which is why it is likewise possible to operate service features and applications which are implemented only on an installation-wide basis), because it presents itself as 15 a single installation from an application point of view. This removes the need for conversion of these methods in order to allow them to operate on a network.

Figure 3 shows, in simplified form, an example of a 20 message flow for connection control in a conventional communications system for setting up a connection between two peripheral devices to which the terminal of a subscriber A, TLNA, and the terminal of a subscriber B, TLNB, are connected. The time sequence for the 25 messages, or control messages, is shown from top to bottom. First, the subscriber A goes off-hook and generates the signaling information OFF HOOK. Next, the communication party required is dialed by entering selection information which is forwarded by an 30 equipment-specific interface module DH to the call processing section CP for the subscriber A.

The selection code analysis WABE for the selection 35 information results in a message SEIZURE being forwarded to the call processing section CP for the subscriber B. An equipment-specific interface module DH which is responsible at that point assigns the connection an explicit timeslot, for example ZS1, for a defined PCM data link, for example PD1, and generates

the control message TSL_ASSIGN for the subscriber line module SLMO1. This control message sends the subscriber line module SLMO1 the explicit timeslot ZS1 and the stipulated PCM data link PD1 which are to be used for
5 the connection. The explicit timeslot ZS1 for the PCM data link PD1 transports communication data on the connection element between subscriber line module SLMO1 and MTS. A second explicit timeslot ZS2 for a second explicitly stipulated PCM data link PD2 is needed for
10 the connection element between MTS and subscriber line module SLMO2. The control information ZS2 and PD2 is communicated to the subscriber line module SLMO2, again using a control message TSL ASSIGN.

15 For physically connecting individual subscribers, TDM-based private branch exchanges use a TDM switching matrix MTS. For this switching matrix, a setting instruction PATH_CONNECT1 is transmitted which causes the timeslot ZS1 for PCM data link PD1 to be connected
20 to the timeslot ZS2 for the PCM data link PD2. This means that the two connection elements are connected to form a continuous link between SLMO1 and SLMO2.

To carry out the method, it does not matter whether CP
25 and DH are part of the control software and whether they are in the form of individual modules or in integrated form.

Figure 4 shows, in simplified form, an example of a
30 message flow between two local devices, for the purposes of connection control. Connected to these devices are the terminal of a subscriber A, TLNA, and the terminal of a subscriber B, TLNB. The transport network used in this case is, by way of example, an ATM network. The time sequence for the messages is again
35 shown from top to bottom.

A functional unit STMA, as gateway, converts the timeslots for the PCM data stream into a cell stream of

ATM cells. In the exemplary embodiment shown in figure 2, the conversion device is respectively incorporated in the local switching center CS1 or CS2 and is therefore not shown separately.

5

The message flow differs from the flow shown in figure 3 after the point at which the setting instruction PATH_CONNECT1 is transmitted for the TDM switching matrix. Instead of a setting instruction PATH_CONNECT1,
10 this embodiment involves the generation of a control message PATH_CONN2 which is sent to the local switching centers. These then set up a connection in the transport network. When an ATM transport network is used, an ATMSVC is set up (ATM Switched Virtual
15 Connection), for example using stipulated ATM signaling methods.

To this end, the control message PATH_CONN2 includes the timeslot information and data link information ZS
20 and PD, which can be taken directly from the setting message PATH_CONNECT1, for example. In addition, the central control device needs to indicate the transport-network-dependent address of the local switching center to which the connection is to be set up. That is to say
25 that the data which need to be provided for the central control mechanism as information relating to the transport network are limited to the transport-network-dependent addresses for the respective local switching centers. The central control device again ascertains
30 the necessary addresses from the timeslot information and data link information ZS and PD. Association tables in a central database DB control the mapping of timeslot/data link to local switching center.

35 This principle is also suitable for controlling heterogeneous transport networks. It may be necessary additionally to store the network type and the available gateway at the same time.

The control message PATH_CONN2 can also include other information, and this can also be generated in a plurality of more specific forms. If connections having different bandwidths need to be set up, it can include
5 information about the required bandwidth. Alternatively, the bandwidth information can also be interchanged directly between subscriber line module and switching center.

10 When the local switching centers have set up a connection in the transport network 700 after receiving the PATH_CONN2 message, the connection is used to transmit the user data. The user data stream on the data link 300/400 between subscriber line module and
15 local device DZ is assigned to a connection between DZ1 and DZ2 by mapping timeslot indication ZS and PD for the connection identifier for the connection.

This means that, despite the possibly complicated flows
20 when setting up a connection via the transport network, the central control mechanism ZE2 need forward only these addresses to the call processing section of the transport network in order to set up a connection there. The rest is handled by the transport-network-specific call processing section.
25

On the basis of this message flow, the PATH_CONNECT instruction is thus replaced by transport-network-specific call processing. To be able to connect TDM-based subscribers independently of transport network using local switching centers, it is necessary to convert timeslots into transport units. This is done in
30 a conversion unit, such as STMA, of which there is at least one, preferably looped into the path of the user data, for each local device. For this purpose, an ATM-PCM gateway, an IP-PCM gateway or another required gateway can be provided.
35

However, the method described is not limited to dialup

connections which are set up dynamically, but can also be used for an ATMPVC (ATMPVC Permanent virtual connection). The information relating to the address may then need to be complemented by information which 5 regulates the use of permanent connections. In addition, other forms of data transmission can also be used, such as IP connections or FDDI (Fiber Distributed Data Interface), etc.

10 Figure 5 shows as an exemplary embodiment a communications arrangement in which local devices DZ are connected to one another by a heterogeneous transport network, the connections in this transport network being distinguished in that connection elements 15 are produced using different communications media or by handling different communications protocols on these connection elements.

Like the arrangement shown and described in figure 2, 20 this mixed communications system is also controlled by a central control device, with control messages being transmitted by the central control mechanism and being sent to the local switching centers CS in order to set up a connection and to sustain or clear down the 25 connection. In this case too, message interchange is effected via a control network, although this control network is not shown to preserve the clarity of the illustration. The reference symbols in the figure can be interpreted in the same way as the reference symbols 30 in the description of the other figures. Unless explicitly mentioned otherwise, functional elements with the same name in the figure also have the same scope of functions in this case.

35 Specifically, the figure shows local devices DZ10 to DZ40 which have subscriber line modules for communications terminals SLMD10 to SLMD40 (not shown). In addition, conversion devices U are provided in the respective local devices DZ, which carry out media

alignment or protocol alignment among the different connection element links.

In addition, local switching centers CS10 to CS40 are shown. The conversion devices and the subscriber line modules SLMD have TDM data links 301 to 304 between them. Specifically, the local devices DZ have the connection element links 71030, 72030, 72040 and 73020 between them. The connections 72040 and 73020 are, by way of example, transport network connection elements based on an ATM network. On the connections 72030 and 71030 shown, the communications protocol used is the Internet Protocol.

The Internet Protocol IP can be used both on an ATM connection and on an Ethernet connection. On the basis of the ISO/OSI (Open Systems Interconnect) protocol standard, the upper layers of a communications protocol can be used on different media. Specifically, this standardized protocol comprises seven layers, with the bottommost layer being the physical layer, the second layer being the data link layer, the third layer being the network layer, the fourth layer being the transport layer, the fifth layer being the session layer, the sixth layer being the presentation layer and the seventh layer being the application layer. In the case of this layer protocol standardized on the basis of ISO IS8802, each layer uses the services of the layer below it. Messages, for example in the form of control messages, which are transmitted using this layer protocol thus progressively receive an additional information item per layer, which produces a data structure in which the original messages have seven layer-specific information elements added to them.

Within the context of this communications protocol, any communications media and any layers can thus be coupled to one another.

The conversion devices U are necessary in order to

match the different layer structures to one another. By way of example, the conversion device U20 converts ATM cell data into TDM data. These ATM cell data can then be forwarded directly as ATM cell data, for example in 5 the local device DZ20 via the local switching center CS20 and via the connection element link 73020.

However, it is likewise possible to forward them to a conversion device U2030 which is in the form of an 10 ATM/IP gateway, for example. There, ATM cell data are conditioned for the Internet Protocol and can then be forwarded via the connection elements 72030 to the local switching center CS30 for the local device DZ 30. The remarkable aspect of this configuration is thus 15 that terminals on the local device DZ20 can communicate with terminals on the local device DZ30 using the Internet Protocol and can also be reached directly on the basis of the asynchronous transfer mode.

20 To be able to actuate the different connection element links 72030 and 73020, a central control device thus requires appropriate complementary control information for control messages for controlling connection setup between communications subscribers, said control 25 information relating to the type of connection path and protocol-specific information, i.e. gateways to be used.

The conversion device U2030 in the local device DZ30 is 30 in the form of an ATM/IP gateway, for example. The local switching center CS30 is, by way of example, an IP router or switch, while U30 is in the form of an TDM/IP gateway. Similarly, the local switching center CS10 for the local device DZ10 is in the form of an IP 35 router/switch, while the conversion device U1030 is in the form of a TDM/IP gateway.

The local device DZ40 likewise contains a local switching center CS40 in the form of an ATM switching

section connected to a conversion device U40 which converts TDM data into ATM cell data.

Additional information for the control mechanism about
5 the reachability of the individual subscribers using particular gateways and about particular conversion devices and switching centers, and also the associated local devices thereof, is stored in a central control device's data store, for example.

10

This centrally stored information can either be distributed to the local units and can thus be the basis for a separate decision by the local units about communications protocols to be used and usable
15 transport media when a connection is set up, or the decision is made in the central station and is communicated to the local device.

On the basis of the control information in this
20 database, an appropriate number of control messages are produced for one or more respective connection elements, such as from DZ40 to DZ10, via the connection elements 72040 and 71030, said control messages being transmitted to the respective local switching centers
25 in order to control connection setup, for example.

The connection variants shown here naturally represent only some of the technically possible variants of connection element links, communications media,
30 communications protocols and conversion devices to which the invention can be applied without restriction, which cannot all be listed.

By way of example, it is likewise possible for local
35 data stores to be provided in the area of local devices DZ, the stock of information in the data stores being limited to devices which are present in the respective local devices DZ. For the case of connection control, although the central control mechanism then needs to

request this information first, such configurations have the advantage that local devices can also be serviced and maintained locally. There is also redundancy in the data storage and better availability 5 of the communications devices, because the failure of a local data store does not affect the entire network.

By way of example, it is likewise possible for the area 10 of local devices DZ to receive data from the central station whose stock of information is limited to the partner devices of local devices.

For the case of connection control, the local device 15 can then make an independent decision about the use of the correct gateways.

A particular advantage of a communications arrangement as shown is that any infrastructures can be matched to one another, and that the specifically directed 20 controllability of the connection element links and of the conversion devices required allows resource-saving connection setup in which unnecessary conversion steps for protocol or media alignment can be avoided in the best way.

25 Similarly, transport networks of any heterogeneity can be controlled by any central control device without complex technical developments in terms of alignment, because transport-network-specific call processing can 30 advantageously be used which is based on information produced by a TDM-based control mechanism.

The specific way in which this can be done has already 35 been described in the explanation of figure 4. The data storage required in such an arrangement can be limited to a minimum degree, because the transport-network-specific data additionally need to be stored. Similarly, such a communications device brings the advantages of a single private branch exchange to bear,

such as the central availability of service features, the central administrability and a central application interface. Advantageously, a plurality of different, possibly already existing, network sections thus
5 produce a standard communications system which has the outward appearance of a single installation but which can be flexibly matched to the technical requirements of the customer by virtue of the choice of conversion devices.

10

Figure 6 shows a particularly advantageous communications arrangement with communications terminals KE10 to KE40 which are connected via an Ethernet and are controlled from a central device
15 ZE 100 via a control network STN. In this case, the connection can be set up both via an Ethernet and via an ATM network, and/or using a hybrid configuration of the transport network. In this embodiment of an arrangement, the devices required for producing, for
20 setting up, for clearing down and for sustaining communications links, which were also included in a local device DZ in the description for figure 5, have been incorporated in one communications terminal KE. The number and selection of available components per
25 terminal depends on the type of communications protocols used and on the communications media which are available.

Such an arrangement provides the option of connecting
30 telephone subscribers to TDM subscribers using the Internet Protocol. In this case, the central control mechanism carries out call processing for the TDM subscribers. As regards the IP telephone subscribers, the functionality of their devices needs to be
35 extended, for example, so that they can provide the scope of functions standardized on the basis of ITU protocols H.323 and H.450. This can advantageously be done by virtue of the equipment-specific alignment modules DH being equipped with the functions of the

H.323 and H.450 protocols for the purposes of actuating IP subscribers. This variant arrangement is particularly advantageous because telephony based on the Internet Protocol can easily be linked to TDM-based

5 telephony. The development complexity for matching the central control device ZE100 to the communications terminals KE is minimal in this context and requires only the development of a specific software module DH.

10 The local switching centers for the communications terminals KE exist, by way of example, in the form of network driver cards for the Ethernet. A clear relationship between Internet addresses (IP addresses) and the connection features of a TDM connection can be

15 produced by assigning an IP address precisely one local device having a subscriber line module and a subscriber line, for example, which device can in turn be reached via precisely one TDM data path. The local device, the subscriber line module, the subscriber line and the TDM

20 data path are not physically present in this case, but rather are set up fictitiously in the software. This makes it possible to continue to use normal control with no great complexity of change. The changes are then for the most part limited to configuration data.

25

Figure 7 shows a partial view of the illustration from figure 5 in order to explain an advantageous embodiment of a communications arrangement and a specific mode of operation of this arrangement. The reference symbols

30 are used in a similar manner to in the other figures in this case. The fact that this illustration shows only two local devices DZ20 and DZ40 need not mean that such an embodiment of a communications arrangement can be limited to just two local devices. Instead, every local

35 device in a communications arrangement can be equipped with the advantageous refinements which will be discussed below.

In contrast to the illustration in figure 5, this

figure shows terminals KE50, KE60, KE70 and KE80. While the terminals KE50 to KE70 are connected by means of communication lines 2050 to 2070 to the local device DZ20 and, there, to the subscriber line module SLMD20, 5 the communications terminal KE80 is connected by means of a connecting line 3080 to the module SLMD40 in the local device DZ40. As already explained above, these modules SLMD20 and SLMD40 communicate with the appropriate local switching centers CS20 and CS40 via 10 TDM connections 304 and 302. As has already been described in this context, transport-network-specific call processing is normally carried out for an arrangement as described. This normal case arises, by way of example, when the communications terminal KE80 15 wishes to communicate via its connecting line 3080, the TDM data link 304, the conversion device U40, the local switching center CS40 and via a transport network link 72040 with one of the communications terminals KE50 to KE70 via the local switching center CS20, the 20 conversion device U20 and the TDM data link 302 and via the subscriber line module SLMD20.

In the case of this specific embodiment, however, it is necessary to prevent a situation where, if 25 communications terminals connected to the same subscriber line module or to the same local device DZ20 communicate with one another via the conversion device U20, because such communications terminals can be connected directly via the TDM data stream by switching 30 their respective timeslots, and converting the TDM data into a transport-network-specific format ties up conversion capacity unnecessarily. Hence, suitable processing when handling a connection between the communications terminals KE50 to KE70 is intended to 35 prevent communications data which are to be interchanged from needing to be converted into a transport-network-specific format, and then back again, using the conversion device U20. For the call processing in such an arrangement, timeslot-related

information about the communications subscribers involved is required. As complementary information, information about the address of local devices to which these communications terminals are connected is 5 additionally provided for specifically directed connection setup.

In an arrangement of the type illustrated in figure 7, the protocol-specific information analyzed is the 10 address of the local device, and if the addresses of the local devices DZ involved and of the terminals to be connected are identical, i.e. terminals connected to the same local device DZ, conversion of the TDM data is prevented and a direct connection is produced between 15 the terminals. This has the advantage that the conversion device, in this case U20, is available for other conversion procedures, that the transport network is not burdened by such procedures, no charges arise in the transport network and similarly the local switching 20 center can perform other tasks. Hence, in this case, the handling of a connection involves the address of a local device for communications terminals KE affected thereby being checked in a respective local device DZ. Advantageously, if the result of this check is 25 positive, a signal is output to an access chip for the TDM data stream, the task of which is to tap off the timeslots from the TDM data stream, or to pass them to the TDM data stream. Using this signal, this chip, for example, produces a short circuit such that the reading 30 and writing directions of the communications terminals involved are interchanged with one another. This chip may possibly be in the form of a switching matrix.

The addresses can be checked both in the local device 35 and in the central device. In the case of a central check, the local switching center is informed that a short circuit needs to be introduced.

DescriptionCOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM AND METHOD

5

CLAIM FOR PRIORITY

This application claims priority
Application No. PCT/DE00/03207 which
the German language on September 14,

Mark up
Copy of
the Specification

10

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to a method and an arrangement
for setting up and clearing down, and sustaining,
communications links, and in particular, within the
context of a private branch exchange and terminals
15 which are to be connected.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The rising volume of communication, as a result of an
increasing number of communications subscribers and
20 rising demands on the volume of data to be transmitted,
places greater and greater demands on switching
centers, in particular on private branch exchanges,
with regard to the volume of data to be transmitted for
each communications link and the number of
25 communications terminals which are to be connected to
one another.

Current devices are based, by way of example, on the
TDM method (Time Division Multiplexing), in which
30 communications data on different connections are
transmitted in respectively defined timeslots. A
connection between different communication parties is
set up by a switching matrix which assigns incoming
timeslots on an incoming connection outgoing timeslots
35 to an outgoing connection on the basis of a control
information item. Such switching matrices are generally
of fixed proportions and can set up only a defined
number of connections, which often makes it difficult
to match exchanges to requirements. Another problem

with such devices is that the timeslots are able to hold only a limited amount of data.

On account of different strengths and weaknesses of networks when transporting voice and data in the local domain, various communications networks have become established for specific purposes of use.

Figure 1 shows an example of a known private branch exchange 150 with two peripheral devices P1 and P2 to which a communications terminal KE1 and KE2 operating on a digital or analog basis is respectively connected. These peripheral devices P1 and P2 are accommodated in the same physical area as the central device ZE1. By way of example, they are in the same room or in the same cabinet as it. The terminals occupy defined timeslots in the PCM data stream (Pulse Code Modulation) with communication data. The digital or analog communications terminals KE1 and KE2 are respectively connected to subscriber line modules SLMO1 and SLMO2 which supply or take digital data, intended for the respective terminals or coming from the respective terminals, to/from the PCM data stream using timeslots stipulated by signaling. These PCM data streams are denoted by 100 and 200 in figure 1. In addition, signaling connections are shown which are represented by 110 and 210. It should be noted that these involve a logical representation and not a physical representation. In reality, however, the transport data and the signaling data are transmitted in the same connecting cable.

This figure also shows peripheral devices P1 and P2 and supply modules LTUC1 and LTUC2 which regulate the data traffic to the subscriber line modules of the respective peripheral devices. The peripheral device P1 is supplied with signaling data via the line 110, and the peripheral device P2 is supplied with signaling data via the signaling line 210.

As can clearly be seen here, this arrangement involves both the information to be transported and the signaling information being supplied to a central device ZE1. In this context, a messaging device DCL collects and distributes messages 2 which are interchanged between the central device ZE1 and the peripheral devices P1, P2. The call processing section CP controls the setup and clear-down of connections and, to this end, uses equipment-specific interface functions DH, inter alia, which are in the form of program modules, for example. This involves producing setting instructions 1 for the switching matrix MTS. These setting instructions essentially indicate which input of the switching matrix is to be connected

to which output in order to provide the object on which the invention is based is that of specifying another method and an arrangement for providing a communications link which ensure a high level of flexibility in terms of matching to network infrastructures. Control and connection functions are thus performed by a single physically incorporated functional unit in the communications network.

Problems arise with such configurations because the data to be transported need to be supplied to the central device ZE1. This is the case even if, by way of example, two communications terminals which are connected to the same peripheral device P1 need to communicate with one another. The wiring complexity required for such devices increases with increasing distance between the terminals and the central device ZE1, which means that this type of arrangement restricts the extent of a private branch exchange or makes installation much more expensive when covering relatively large areas.

In such devices, problems likewise arise with regard to modular extendibility both in terms of the number of connections and in terms of the volume of data to be

transmitted. This type of embodiment does not allow different data rates for each individual communications link.

5 Alignment and/or transparent integration of different network infrastructures is likewise not possible.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

10 The invention specifies a method and an arrangement for providing a communications link which ensure a high level of flexibility in terms of matching to network infrastructures and in terms of the physical extent thereof.

15 This object is achieved for the method on the basis of the features of patent claim 1 and for the arrangement on the basis of the features of patent claim 8. Developments of the invention can be found in the dependent claims.

20 A particular advantage is that the inventive method allows One advantage of the invention is the operation of a heterogeneous communications network using a joint control mechanism, because information about the type 25 of protocol which can be used to reach respective subscribers is held in the area of the central control mechanism, or in the transport network. Advantageously, the topology of the transport network can differ from that of the control network in this context. This makes 30 it possible to set up a communications link while avoiding numerous diverse conversion procedures which would be necessary on a previously stipulated path between the subscribers. This advantageously takes account of the fact that the subscribers communicate 35 using different communications protocols, with local matching to the required communications protocol, as opposed to central matching, allowing the communications path to be routed via a minimal number of conversion devices, which protects the resources in 40 the network and keeps down the length of the

communications paths in the transport network.

A particular advantage is that one development of In one embodiment of the invention, the method described 5 provides not only the protocol information item but also a media information item relating to the transport network, because this makes it possible to take into account the characteristic of different transmission media in terms of transport quality, utilization and 10 speed when controlling the connection setup.

A particular advantage is that one development of In another embodiment of the invention, the method described allows the different protocol structure of 15 communications protocols handled on a single medium or on different media to be taken into account by actuating suitable protocol conversion units, associated with communications subscribers which are involved, in an appropriately defined manner when 20 setting up and sustaining the connection.

A particular advantage is that one development of In still another embodiment of the invention, the method described allows a defined media access device to be 25 actuated for a particular communications subscriber. If a plurality of transport media are available for each communications subscriber, this advantageously allows them to be specifically taken into account and actuated when a connection is set up.

30 A particular advantage is that one development of In another embodiment of the invention, the method described allows the information required for controlling the transport network to be set up and/or 35 provided centrally, because the problem of updating, maintaining and saving these data is then limited to the maintenance of a central database.

Advantageously, one development aspect of the method 40 described affords the opportunity for required control

information to be provided locally in the transport network and for the control mechanism to request it when a connection is set up, because this allows local measures for aligning the transport network to be taken
5 without such measures affecting the entire transport network and a central control mechanism.

Advantageously, in ~~one development~~ another aspect of the method described, in which the transport network provided is a network to which information is transmitted on the basis of the Internet Protocol, a local device is controlled by assigning to an IP address precisely one PCM data-stream subscriber line and an entire local device, because this allows IP
10 subscribers to be managed and controlled using control mechanisms which likewise actuate TDM-based communications devices, without the additional need for a high level of development complexity in order to match these devices to IP-based terminals. This allows existing conventional telephone installations also to be used for IP telephony, for example, where conventional telephone installations provide a large quantity of service features, or else makes it possible to control data links to a telephone installation and thus to enhance them with service features.
15
20
25

~~A great One~~ advantage of ~~one development~~ of the method described is that the setup of a direct connection between communications terminals relieves the burden on transport-network-specific devices, such as the local switching centers and the conversion devices required for the otherwise necessary data conversion. This makes it possible to increase the performance of the transport network.
30
35

Particularly advantageously, In another embodiment of the invention, there is an arrangement for setting up/clearing down and/or sustaining a communications link has means which output at least two control
40 information items to two local devices in the transport

network if at least one connection element between these local devices is affected, because this provides a configuration for controlling heterogeneous transport networks which involves transmitting connection information, which is suitable for controlling TDM links, together with the required protocol information item to the local devices affected by the connection setup/clear-down and/or sustenance. Particularly advantageously, one such arrangement likewise allows operation of a mixed infrastructure comprising TDM-based switching centers and IP-based local area networks.

~~A particular advantage is that one development of such~~
15 In another embodiment of the invention, there is an arrangement has having a central control device which provides transport-network-specific media information or protocol information and makes it available for connection setup. This ensures, in connection with an existing TDM-based communications infrastructure, that the available central database, possibly service feature implementation and application interface, can continue to be used and need be extended only by the protocol- and media-specific information for operating 20 mixed infrastructures.

Compared with the central solution, local provision of the complementary control information required has the advantage that configuration changes affect ~~only~~ local areas of local devices and not the entire transport network, which means that a more flexible device is produced in which the respective current stock of control information is requested for connection setup before central control of the transport network ~~only~~ 30 when a connection is being set up.

~~Advantageously, one development~~ In one aspect of the arrangement described has, there is a gateway for converting a TDM protocol into the Internet Protocol, 40 because such a gateway can connect TDM-based units to a

transport network on which the Internet Protocol is handled.

Advantageously, one development In another aspect of the arrangement described has, there is a checking device for checking protocol-specific information for the address of a local device, because this makes it possible to ensure that there is no need for a procedure for converting the communication data into transport-network-specific communication data for communications links between communications terminals associated with a single local device. Advantageously, there is therefore no delay as a result of conversion and no loss of data as a result of conversion methods which may not be loss free.

Advantageously, one development In still another aspect of the arrangement described has, there is a mechanism which can produce a short circuit within a TDM data stream between two subscribers to be connected, because this allows internal communications links to be set up in a technically elegant fashion without using the local switching center and the conversion device.

Advantageously, an internal connection is set up, in one development embodiment of the arrangement described, by interchanging the reading and writing directions of timeslots in a TDM data stream, because this allows a communications link to be produced within a local device in a technically most simple manner.

Advantageously, one development embodiment of the arrangement described has an Ethernet access facility, because such a network access facility allows a terminal to access the Ethernet. Such network access cards are available on the market and are a simple and inexpensive solution for producing mixed transport networks with connection elements via the Ethernet.

Particularly advantageously, all the devices provided

for heterogeneous network operation in local devices are incorporated in specific terminals, because such a terminal can be controlled by a TDM-based control mechanism, customary to date, with equipment-specific
5 stipulation of a single TDM data stream in connection with a single subscriber line and a subscriber line module without any great complexity for aligning control mechanism customary to date.

10 One particular advantage is that in one development embodiment of such arrangements provides, telephones and personal computers are provided as terminals, because these are the terminals which are used most frequently and direct connection of these units to the
15 Ethernet for voice communication represents great additional benefit for terminal users if they can be operated by a central control mechanism in conjunction with conventional devices.

20 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Exemplary embodiments of the invention are explained in more detail below with reference to figures.

Figure 1 shows a conventional communications arrangement..

Figure 2 shows an example of a novel communications arrangement..

30 Figure 3 shows an example of a message flow in a known switching system..

Figure 4 shows an example of a message flow using timeslot-based connection information for the transport
35 network..

Figure 5 shows a communications infrastructure in which different communications protocols are used on connection element links..

Figure 6 shows a communications infrastructure using IP-based terminals, and.

Figure 7 shows another exemplary embodiment.

5

Figure 1 shows an example of a known private branch exchange 150 with two peripheral devices P1 and P2 to which a communications terminal KE1 and KE2 operating on a digital or analog basis is respectively connected. 10 These peripheral devices P1 and P2 are accommodated in the same physical area as the central device ZE1. By way of example, they are in the same room or in the same cabinet as it. The terminals occupy defined timeslots in the PCM data stream (Pulse Code Modulation) with communication data. The digital or analog communications terminals KE1 and KE2 are 15 respectively connected to subscriber line modules SLM01 and SLM02 which supply or take digital data, intended for the respective terminals or coming from the 20 respective terminals, to/from the PCM data stream using timeslots stipulated by signaling. These PCM data streams are denoted by 100 and 200 in figure 1. In addition, signaling connections are shown which are represented by 110 and 210. It should be noted that 25 these involve only a logical representation and not a physical representation. In reality, however, the transport data and the signaling data are transmitted in the same connecting cable.

30 This figure also shows peripheral devices P1 and P2 and supply modules LTUC1 and LTUC2 which regulate the data traffic to the subscriber line modules of the respective peripheral devices. The peripheral device P1 is supplied with signaling data via the line 110, and 35 the peripheral device P2 is supplied with signaling data via the signaling line 210.

As can clearly be seen here, this arrangement involves both the information to be transported and the 40 signaling information being supplied to a central

device ZE1. In this context, a messaging device DCL collects and distributes messages which are interchanged between the central device ZE1 and the peripheral devices P1, P2. The call processing section CP controls the setup and clear down of connections and, to this end, uses equipment specific interface functions DH, inter alia, which are in the form of program modules, for example. This involves producing setting instructions for the switching matrix MTS. These setting instructions essentially indicate which input of the switching matrix is to be connected to which output in order to provide a communications link. Control and connection functions are thus performed by a single physically incorporated functional unit in the communications network.

Problems arise with such configurations because all the data to be transported need to be supplied to the central device ZE1. This is the case even if, by way of example, two communications terminals which are connected to the same peripheral device P1 need to communicate with one another. The wiring complexity required for such devices increases with increasing distance between the terminals and the central device ZE1, which means that this type of arrangement restricts the areal extent of a private branch exchange or makes installation much more expensive when covering relatively large areas.

In such devices, problems likewise arise with regard to modular extendibility both in terms of the number of connections and in terms of the volume of data to be transmitted. This type of embodiment does not allow different data rates for each individual communications link.

Alignment and/or transparent integration of different network infrastructures is likewise not possible.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Figure 2 shows an example of a flexible arrangement for

setting up communications links. By way of example, this arrangement illustrates the structure of a private branch exchange 250.

5 Equivalent reference symbols in figure 2 denote the same elements of the device as in figure 1. Looking at figure 2, it is immediately noticeable that the transport of communication data is triggered by the message traffic of the control messages. To this end, a
10 separate transport network 700 and a separate control network 310/410 are provided in this case. This design of an exchange has the advantage that any already existing networks, such as public or private voice and data networks, can be used for the transport network.
15 Only the control network needs to be routed to the central device ZE2 in this case. The use of conversion devices, such as gateways, advantageously makes it possible to operate and control any hybrid configurations.
20

The digital or analog communications terminals KE1 and KE2 are in this case shown such that they are respectively connected to subscriber line modules SLMO1 and SLMO2. Without limiting the invention, however,
25 such an arrangement 250 can also involve and incorporate terminals which can be connected to the transport network 700 directly, with bypassing or without an SLMO. It is also possible to connect ATM terminals or else IP-based (Internet Protocol)
30 terminals. One example of a possible hybrid configuration is shown in figure 5 and is explained in the associated part of the description. Directly connected terminals are shown in figure 6 and are described by the associated part of the description of
35 the figures.

As will also be recognized, the local devices DZ1 and DZ2 each have local switching centers CS1 and CS2 which, by way of example, can be in the form of
40 Ethernet or ATM access devices.

In the case of mixed transport networks, gateways and routers and also media of any type can be connected to one another as required. The illustration likewise 5 shows that the switching matrix MTS0 is no longer used for connection tasks.

Instead, the transport network performs the connection tasks.

10 In the present arrangement, ~~to this end~~, the control lines 410 and 310 are used to provide at least one respective control information item just for the respective local switching centers CS1 and CS2 for the purposes of setting up the communications link, said 15 the control information item being derived from a timeslot-based control information item. The information is interchanged using messages. In addition, the figure shows that PCM data are converted into cell data according to the standard of the 20 transport network type 700, such as ATM cell data, on a data link 300 or 400. In this context, it should be noted that the use of an ATM network as transport network serves only as an exemplary embodiment. Ethernet networks, other IP connections or even TDM 25 connections are likewise suitable. The selection is dependent on the intended purpose of use and extends to the whole range of available networks and also optical media, both in the narrowband range and in the broadband range.

30

If appropriate, various transport networks can be provided; in that case, gateways secure the link between the various network sections.

35

Preferably, the local switching centers CS1 and CS2 perform transport-network-dependent call processing, although this is essentially limited to a basic call functionality. Service features are implemented and provided by the central control mechanism ZE2.

40

Connections between the different local devices are

controlled by the central device ZE2 using signaling messages. The advantages of this arrangement are that it has both narrowband capability and broadband capability. It allows the integration of any network types and topologies. In addition, the transport network can be set up both on public networks and on private networks, or else can comprise a mixture. It is advantageously possible for local devices at a distance without physical limitation to be associated with the central device ZE2, so that powerful devices with a large physical extent can also be provided by such a private branch exchange. The retention of a joint control mechanism means that it is possible to continue to use already existing software with minimal changes.

One advantage of such a device 250 over a networked system comprising devices 150 is that the distributed system is a single installation (which is why it is likewise possible to operate service features and applications which are implemented only on an installation-wide basis), because it presents itself as a single installation from an application point of view. This removes the need for conversion of these methods in order to allow them to operate on a network.

Figure 3 shows, in simplified form, an example of a message flow for connection control in a conventional communications system for setting up a connection between two peripheral devices to which the terminal of a subscriber A, TLNA, and the terminal of a subscriber B, TLNB, are connected. The time sequence for the messages, or control messages, is shown from top to bottom. First, the subscriber A goes off-hook and generates the signaling information OFF HOOK. Next, the communication party required is dialed by entering selection information which is forwarded by an equipment-specific interface module DH to the call processing section CP for the subscriber A.

The selection code analysis WABE for the selection information results in a message SEIZURE being

forwarded to the call processing section CP for the subscriber B. An equipment-specific interface module DH which is responsible at that point assigns the connection an explicit timeslot, for example ZS1, for a defined PCM data link, for example PD1, and generates the control message TSL_ASSIGN for the subscriber line module SLMO1. This control message sends the subscriber line module SLMO1 the explicit timeslot ZS1 and the stipulated PCM data link PD1 which are to be used for the connection. The explicit timeslot ZS1 for the PCM data link PD1 transports communication data on the connection element between subscriber line module SLMO1 and MTS. A second explicit timeslot ZS2 for a second explicitly stipulated PCM data link PD2 is needed for the connection element between MTS and subscriber line module SLMO2. The control information ZS2 and PD2 is communicated to the subscriber line module SLMO2, again using a control message TSL ASSIGN.

20 For physically connecting individual subscribers, TDM-based private branch exchanges use a TDM switching matrix MTS. For this switching matrix, a setting instruction PATH_CONNECT1 is transmitted which causes the timeslot ZS1 for PCM data link PD1 to be connected
25 to the timeslot ZS2 for the PCM data link PD2. This means that the two connection elements are connected to form a continuous link between SLMO1 and SLMO2.

To carry out the method, it does not matter whether CP and DH are part of the control software and whether they are in the form of individual modules or in integrated form.

Figure 4 shows, in simplified form, an example of a message flow between two local devices, for the purposes of connection control. Connected to these devices are the terminal of a subscriber A, TLNA, and the terminal of a subscriber B, TLNB. The transport network used in this case is, by way of example, an ATM network. The time sequence for the messages is again

shown from top to bottom.

A functional unit STMA, as gateway, converts the timeslots for the PCM data stream into a cell stream of ATM cells. In the exemplary embodiment shown in figure 2, the conversion device is respectively incorporated in the local switching center CS1 or CS2 and is therefore not shown separately.

The message flow differs from the flow shown in figure 3 only after the point at which the setting instruction PATH_CONNECT1 is transmitted for the TDM switching matrix. Instead of a setting instruction PATH_CONNECT1, this embodiment involves the generation of a control message PATH_CONN2 which is sent to the local switching centers. These then set up a connection in the transport network. When an ATM transport network is used, an ATMSVC is set up (ATM Switched Virtual Connection), for example using stipulated ATM signaling methods.

To this end, the control message PATH_CONN2 needs to contain includes the timeslot information and data link information ZS and PD, which can be taken directly from the setting message PATH_CONNECT1, for example. In addition, the central control device needs to indicate just the transport-network-dependent address of the local switching center to which the connection is to be set up. That is to say that the data which need to be provided for the central control mechanism as information relating to the transport network are limited to the transport-network-dependent addresses for the respective local switching centers. The central control device again ascertains the necessary addresses from the timeslot information and data link information ZS and PD. Association tables in a central database DB control the mapping of timeslot/data link to local switching center.

This principle is also suitable for controlling

heterogeneous transport networks. It may be necessary additionally to store the network type and the available gateway at the same time.

- 5 The control message PATH_CONN2 can also contain include other information, and this can also be generated in a plurality of more specific forms. If connections having different bandwidths need to be set up, it can include contain
- 10 information about the required bandwidth. Alternatively, the bandwidth information can also be interchanged directly between subscriber line module and switching center.
- 15 When the local switching centers have set up a connection in the transport network 700 after receiving the PATH_CONN2 message, said the connection is used to transmit the user data. The user data stream on the data link 300/400 between subscriber line module and local device DZ is assigned to a connection between DZ1 and DZ2 by mapping timeslot indication ZS and PD for the connection identifier for the connection.

- 25 This means that, despite the possibly complicated flows when setting up a connection via the transport network, the central control mechanism ZE2 need forward only these addresses to the call processing section of the transport network in order to set up a connection there. The rest is handled by the transport-network-specific call processing section.

- 30 On the basis of this message flow, the PATH_CONNECT instruction is thus replaced by transport-network-specific call processing. To be able to connect TDM-based subscribers independently of transport network using local switching centers, it is necessary to convert timeslots into transport units. This is done in a conversion unit, such as STMA, of which there is at least one, preferably looped into the path of the user data, for each local device. For this purpose, an ATM-

PCM gateway, an IP-PCM gateway or another required gateway can be provided.

However, the method described is not limited to dialup connections which are set up dynamically, but can also be used for an ATMPVC (ATMPVC Permanent virtual connection). The information relating to the address may then need to be complemented by information which regulates the use of permanent connections. In addition, other forms of data transmission can also be used, such as IP connections or FDDI (Fiber Distributed Data Interface), etc.

Figure 5 shows as an exemplary embodiment a communications arrangement in which local devices DZ are connected to one another by a heterogeneous transport network, the connections in this transport network being distinguished in that connection elements are produced using different communications media or by handling different communications protocols on these connection elements.

Like the arrangement shown and described in figure 2, this mixed communications system is also controlled by a central control device, with control messages being transmitted by the central control mechanism and being sent to the local switching centers CS in order to set up a connection and to sustain or clear down the connection. In this case too, message interchange is effected via a control network, although this control network is not shown to preserve the clarity of the illustration. The reference symbols in the figure can be interpreted in the same way as the reference symbols in the description of the other figures. Unless explicitly mentioned otherwise, functional elements with the same name in the figure also have the same scope of functions in this case.

Specifically, the figure shows local devices DZ10 to DZ40 which have subscriber line modules for

communications terminals SLMD10 to SLMD40 (not shown). In addition, conversion devices U are provided in the respective local devices DZ, which carry out media alignment or protocol alignment among the different 5 connection element links.

In addition, local switching centers CS10 to CS40 are shown. The conversion devices and the subscriber line modules SLMD have TDM data links 301 to 304 between 10 them. Specifically, the local devices DZ have the connection element links 71030, 72030, 72040 and 73020 between them. The connections 72040 and 73020 are, by way of example, transport network connection elements based on an ATM network. On the connections 72030 and 15 71030 shown, the communications protocol used is the Internet Protocol.

The Internet Protocol IP can be used both on an ATM connection and on an Ethernet connection. On the basis 20 of the ISO/OSI (Open Systems Interconnect) protocol standard, the upper layers of a communications protocol can be used on different media. Specifically, this standardized protocol comprises seven layers, with the bottommost layer being the physical layer, the second 25 layer being the data link layer, the third layer being the network layer, the fourth layer being the transport layer, the fifth layer being the session layer, the sixth layer being the presentation layer and the seventh layer being the application layer. In the case 30 of this layer protocol standardized on the basis of ISO IS8802, each layer uses the services of the layer below it. Messages, for example in the form of control messages, which are transmitted using this layer protocol thus progressively receive an additional 35 information item per layer, which produces a data structure in which the original messages have seven layer-specific information elements added to them. Within the context of this communications protocol, any communications media and any layers can thus be coupled 40 to one another.

• The conversion devices U are necessary in order to match the different layer structures to one another. By way of example, the conversion device U20 converts ATM cell data into TDM data. These ATM cell data can then be forwarded directly as ATM cell data, for example in the local device DZ20 via the local switching center CS20 and via the connection element link 73020.

10 However, it is likewise possible to forward them to a conversion device U2030 which is in the form of an ATM/IP gateway, for example. There, ATM cell data are conditioned for the Internet Protocol and can then be forwarded via the connection elements 72030 to the local switching center CS30 for the local device DZ 30. The remarkable aspect of this configuration is thus that terminals on the local device DZ20 can communicate with terminals on the local device DZ30 using the Internet Protocol and can also be reached directly on the basis of the asynchronous transfer mode.

To be able to actuate the different connection element links 72030 and 73020, a central control device thus requires appropriate complementary control information for control messages for controlling connection setup between communications subscribers, said control information relating to the type of connection path and protocol-specific information, i.e. gateways to be used.

30 The conversion device U2030 in the local device DZ30 is in the form of an ATM/IP gateway, for example. The local switching center CS30 is, by way of example, an IP router or switch, while U30 is in the form of an TDM/IP gateway. Similarly, the local switching center CS10 for the local device DZ10 is in the form of an IP router/switch, while the conversion device U1030 is in the form of a TDM/IP gateway.

40 The local device DZ40 likewise contains a local

switching center CS40 in the form of an ATM switching section connected to a conversion device U40 which converts TDM data into ATM cell data.

5 Additional information for the control mechanism about the reachability of the individual subscribers using particular gateways and about particular conversion devices and switching centers, and also the associated local devices thereof, is stored in a central control
10 device's data store, for example.

This centrally stored information can either be distributed to the local units and can thus be the basis for a separate decision by the local units about
15 communications protocols to be used and usable transport media when a connection is set up, or the decision is made in the central station and is communicated to the local device.

20 On the basis of the control information in this database, an appropriate number of control messages are produced for one or more respective connection elements, such as from DZ40 to DZ10, via the connection elements 72040 and 71030, said control messages being
25 transmitted to the respective local switching centers in order to control connection setup, for example.

The connection variants shown here naturally represent only some of the technically possible variants of
30 connection element links, communications media, communications protocols and conversion devices to which the invention can be applied without restriction, which cannot all be listed.

35 By way of example, it is likewise possible for local data stores to be provided in the area of local devices DZ, the stock of information in said the data stores being limited only to devices which are present in the respective local devices DZ. For the case of connection
40 control, although the central control mechanism then

needs to request this information first, such configurations have the advantage that local devices can also be serviced and maintained locally. There is also redundancy in the data storage and better 5 availability of the communications devices, because the failure of a local data store does not affect the entire network.

By way of example, it is likewise possible for the area 10 of local devices DZ to receive data from the central station whose stock of information is limited to the partner devices of local devices.

For the case of connection control, the local device 15 can then make an independent decision about the use of the correct gateways.

A particular advantage of a communications arrangement as shown is that any infrastructures can be matched to 20 one another, and that the specifically directed controllability of the connection element links and of the conversion devices required allows resource-saving connection setup in which unnecessary conversion steps for protocol or media alignment can be avoided in the 25 best way.

Similarly, transport networks of any heterogeneity can be controlled by any central control device without complex technical developments in terms of alignment, 30 because transport-network-specific call processing can advantageously be used which is based on information produced by a TDM-based control mechanism.

The specific way in which this can be done has already 35 been described in the explanation of figure 4. The data storage required in such an arrangement can be limited to a minimum degree, because only the transport-network-specific data additionally need to be stored. Similarly, such a communications device brings the 40 advantages of a single private branch exchange to bear,

such as the central availability of service features, the central administrability and a central application interface. Advantageously, a plurality of different, possibly already existing, network sections thus
5 produce a standard communications system which has the outward appearance of a single installation but which can be flexibly matched to the technical requirements of the customer by virtue of the choice of conversion devices.

10

Figure 6 shows a particularly advantageous communications arrangement with communications terminals KE10 to KE40 which are connected via an Ethernet and are controlled from a central device
15 ZE 100 via a control network STN. In this case, the connection can be set up both via an Ethernet and via an ATM network, and/or using a hybrid configuration of the transport network. In this embodiment of an arrangement, the devices required for producing, for
20 setting up, for clearing down and for sustaining communications links, which were also contained
included in a local device DZ in the description for figure 5, have all been incorporated in one communications terminal KE. The number and selection of
25 available components per terminal depends on the type of communications protocols used and on the communications media which are available.

Such an arrangement provides the option of connecting
30 telephone subscribers to TDM subscribers using the Internet Protocol. In this case, the central control mechanism carries out call processing for the TDM subscribers. As regards the IP telephone subscribers, the functionality of their devices needs to be
35 extended, for example, so that they can provide the scope of functions standardized on the basis of ITU protocols H.323 and H.450. This can advantageously be done by virtue of the equipment-specific alignment modules DH being equipped with the functions of the
40 H.323 and H.450 protocols for the purposes of actuating

IP subscribers. This variant arrangement is particularly advantageous because telephony based on the Internet Protocol can easily be linked to TDM-based telephony. The development complexity for matching the 5 central control device ZE100 to the communications terminals KE is minimal in this context and requires only the development of a specific software module DH.

The local switching centers for the communications 10 terminals KE exist, by way of example, in the form of network driver cards for the Ethernet. A clear relationship between Internet addresses (IP addresses) and the connection features of a TDM connection can be produced by assigning an IP address precisely one local 15 device having a subscriber line module and a subscriber line, for example, which device can in turn be reached via precisely one TDM data path. The local device, the subscriber line module, the subscriber line and the TDM data path are not physically present in this case, but 20 rather are set up only fictitiously in the software. This makes it possible to continue to use normal control with no great complexity of change. The changes are then for the most part limited to configuration data.

25

Figure 7 shows a partial view of the illustration from figure 5 in order to explain an advantageous embodiment 30 of a communications arrangement and a specific mode of operation of this arrangement. The reference symbols are used in a similar manner to in the other figures in this case. The fact that this illustration shows only two local devices DZ20 and DZ40 need not mean that such an embodiment of a communications arrangement can be limited to just two local devices. Instead, every local 35 device in a communications arrangement can be equipped with the advantageous refinements which will be discussed below.

In contrast to the illustration in figure 5, this 40 figure shows terminals KE50, KE60, KE70 and KE80. While

the terminals KE50 to KE70 are connected by means of communication lines 2050 to 2070 to the local device DZ20 and, there, to the subscriber line module SLMD20, the communications terminal KE80 is connected by means 5 of a connecting line 3080 to the module SLMD40 in the local device DZ40. As already explained above, these modules SLMD20 and SLMD40 communicate with the appropriate local switching centers CS20 and CS40 via TDM connections 304 and 302. As has already been 10 described in this context, transport-network-specific call processing is normally carried out for an arrangement as described. This normal case arises, by way of example, when the communications terminal KE80 wishes to communicate via its connecting line 3080, the 15 TDM data link 304, the conversion device U40, the local switching center CS40 and via a transport network link 72040 with one of the communications terminals KE50 to KE70 via the local switching center CS20, the conversion device U20 and the TDM data link 302 and via 20 the subscriber line module SLMD20.

In the case of this specific embodiment, however, it is necessary to prevent a situation where, if 25 communications terminals connected to the same subscriber line module or to the same local device DZ20 communicate with one another via the conversion device U20, because such communications terminals can be connected directly via the TDM data stream by switching their respective timeslots, and converting the TDM data 30 into a transport-network-specific format ties up conversion capacity unnecessarily. Hence, suitable processing when handling a connection between the communications terminals KE50 to KE70 is intended to prevent communications data which are to be 35 interchanged from needing to be converted into a transport-network-specific format, and then back again, using the conversion device U20. For the call processing in such an arrangement, timeslot-related information about the communications subscribers 40 involved is required. As complementary information,

information about the address of local devices to which these communications terminals are connected is additionally provided for specifically directed connection setup.

5

In an arrangement of the type illustrated in figure 7, the protocol-specific information analyzed is the address of the local device, and if the addresses of the local devices DZ involved and of the terminals to be connected are identical, i.e. terminals connected to the same local device DZ, conversion of the TDM data is prevented and a direct connection is produced between the terminals. This has the advantage that the conversion device, in this case U20, is available for other conversion procedures, that the transport network is not burdened by such procedures, no charges arise in the transport network and similarly the local switching center can perform other tasks. Hence, in this case, the handling of a connection involves the address of a local device for communications terminals KE affected thereby being checked in a respective local device DZ. Advantageously, if the result of this check is positive, a signal is output to an access chip for the TDM data stream, the task of which is to tap off the timeslots from the TDM data stream, or to pass them to the TDM data stream. Using this signal, this chip, for example, produces a short circuit such that the reading and writing directions of the communications terminals involved are interchanged with one another. This chip may possibly be in the form of a switching matrix.

The addresses can be checked both in the local device and in the central device. In the case of a central check, the local switching center is informed that a short circuit needs to be introduced.

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Description

7/Pxtp

Communications system

5 The invention relates to a method and an arrangement for setting up and clearing down, and sustaining, communications links, in particular within the context of a private branch exchange and terminals which are to be connected.

10

The rising volume of communication, as a result of an increasing number of communications subscribers and rising demands on the volume of data to be transmitted, places greater and greater demands on switching centers, in particular on private branch exchanges, with regard to the volume of data to be transmitted for each communications link and the number of communications terminals which are to be connected to one another.

15

Current devices are based, by way of example, on the TDM method (Time Division Multiplexing), in which communications data on different connections are transmitted in respectively defined timeslots. A connection between different communication parties is set up by a switching matrix which assigns incoming timeslots on an incoming connection outgoing timeslots to an outgoing connection on the basis of a control information item. Such switching matrices are generally of fixed proportions and can set up only a defined number of connections, which often makes it difficult to match exchanges to requirements. Another problem with such devices is that the timeslots are able to hold only a limited amount of data.

20

On account of different strengths and weaknesses of networks when transporting voice and data in the local domain, various communications networks have become established for specific purposes of use.

The object on which the invention is based is that of specifying another method and an arrangement for providing a communications link which ensure a high 5 level of flexibility in terms of matching to network infrastructures and in terms of the physical extent thereof. This object is achieved for the method on the basis of the features of patent claim 1 and for the arrangement on the basis of the features of patent 10 claim 8. Developments of the invention can be found in the dependent claims.

A particular advantage is that the inventive method allows the operation of a heterogeneous communications 15 network using a joint control mechanism, because information about the type of protocol which can be used to reach respective subscribers is held in the area of the central control mechanism, or in the transport network. Advantageously, the topology of the 20 transport network can differ from that of the control network in this context. This makes it possible to set up a communications link while avoiding numerous diverse conversion procedures which would be necessary on a previously stipulated path between the 25 subscribers. This advantageously takes account of the fact that the subscribers communicate using different communications protocols, with local matching to the required communications protocol, as opposed to central matching, allowing the communications path to be routed 30 via a minimal number of conversion devices, which protects the resources in the network and keeps down the length of the communications paths in the transport network.

35 A particular advantage is that one development of the method described provides not only the protocol information item but also a media information item relating to the transport network, because this makes it possible to take into account the characteristic of

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different transmission media in terms of transport quality, utilization and speed when controlling the connection setup.

5 A particular advantage is that one development of the method described allows the different protocol structure of communications protocols handled on a single medium or on different media to be taken into account by actuating suitable protocol conversion
10 units, associated with communications subscribers which are involved, in an appropriately defined manner when setting up and sustaining the connection.

15 A particular advantage is that one development of the method described allows a defined media access device to be actuated for a particular communications subscriber. If a plurality of transport media are available for each communications subscriber, this advantageously allows them to be specifically taken
20 into account and actuated when a connection is set up.

A particular advantage is that one development of the method described allows the information required for controlling the transport network to be set up and/or
25 provided centrally, because the problem of updating, maintaining and saving these data is then limited to the maintenance of a central database.

Advantageously, one development of the method described
30 affords the opportunity for required control information to be provided locally in the transport network and for the control mechanism to request it when a connection is set up, because this allows local measures for aligning the transport network to be taken
35 without such measures affecting the entire transport network and a central control mechanism.

Advantageously, in one development of the method described, in which the transport network provided is a

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network to which information is transmitted on the basis of the Internet Protocol, a local device is controlled by assigning to an IP address precisely one PCM data-stream subscriber line and an entire local 5 device, because this allows IP subscribers to be managed and controlled using control mechanisms which likewise actuate TDM-based communications devices, without the additional need for a high level of development complexity in order to match these devices 10 to IP-based terminals. This allows existing conventional telephone installations also to be used for IP telephony, for example, where conventional telephone installations provide a large quantity of service features, or else makes it possible to control 15 data links to a telephone installation and thus to enhance them with service features.

A great advantage of one development of the method described is that the setup of a direct connection 20 between communications terminals relieves the burden on transport-network-specific devices, such as the local switching centers and the conversion devices required for the otherwise necessary data conversion. This makes it possible to increase the performance of the 25 transport network.

Particularly advantageously, an arrangement for setting up/clearing down and/or sustaining a communications link has means which output at least two control 30 information items to two local devices in the transport network if at least one connection element between these local devices is affected, because this provides a configuration for controlling heterogeneous transport networks which involves transmitting connection 35 information, which is suitable for controlling TDM links, together with the required protocol information item to the local devices affected by the connection setup/clear-down and/or sustenance. Particularly advantageously, one such arrangement likewise allows

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operation of a mixed infrastructure comprising TDM-based switching centers and IP-based local area networks.

5 A particular advantage is that one development of such an arrangement has a central control device which provides transport-network-specific media information or protocol information and makes it available for connection setup. This ensures, in connection with an
10 existing TDM-based communications infrastructure, that the available central database, possibly service feature implementation and application interface, can continue to be used and need be extended only by the
15 protocol- and media-specific information for operating mixed infrastructures.

Compared with the central solution, local provision of the complementary control information required has the advantage that configuration changes affect only local
20 areas of local devices and not the entire transport network, which means that a more flexible device is produced in which the respective current stock of control information is requested for connection setup before central control of the transport network only
25 when a connection is being set up.

Advantageously, one development of the arrangement described has a gateway for converting a TDM protocol into the Internet Protocol, because such a gateway can
30 connect TDM-based units to a transport network on which the Internet Protocol is handled.

Advantageously, one development of the arrangement described has a checking device for checking protocol-specific information for the address of a local device, because this makes it possible to ensure that there is no need for a procedure for converting the communication data into transport-network-specific communication data for communications links between

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communications terminals associated with a single local device. Advantageously, there is therefore no delay as a result of conversion and no loss of data as a result of conversion methods which may not be loss free.

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Advantageously, one development of the arrangement described has a mechanism which can produce a short circuit within a TDM data stream between two subscribers to be connected, because this allows 10 internal communications links to be set up in a technically elegant fashion without using the local switching center and the conversion device.

Advantageously, an internal connection is set up, in 15 one development of the arrangement described, by interchanging the reading and writing directions of timeslots in a TDM data stream, because this allows a communications link to be produced within a local device in a technically most simple manner.

20

Advantageously, one development of the arrangement described has an Ethernet access facility, because such a network access facility allows a terminal to access the Ethernet. Such network access cards are available 25 on the market and are a simple and inexpensive solution for producing mixed transport networks with connection elements via the Ethernet.

Particularly advantageously, all the devices provided 30 for heterogeneous network operation in local devices are incorporated in specific terminals, because such a terminal can be controlled by a TDM-based control mechanism, customary to date, with equipment-specific stipulation of a single TDM data stream in connection 35 with a single subscriber line and a subscriber line module without any great complexity for aligning control mechanism customary to date.

One particular advantage is that one development of

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such arrangements provides telephones and personal computers as terminals, because these are the terminals which are used most frequently and direct connection of these units to the Ethernet for voice communication 5 represents great additional benefit for terminal users if they can be operated by a central control mechanism in conjunction with conventional devices.

Exemplary embodiments of the invention are explained in 10 more detail below with reference to figures.

Figure 1 shows a conventional communications arrangement,

Figure 2 shows an example of a novel 15 communications arrangement,

Figure 3 shows an example of a message flow in a known switching system,

Figure 4 shows an example of a message flow 20 using timeslot-based connection information for the transport network,

Figure 5 shows a communications infrastructure in which different communications protocols are used on connection element links,

Figure 6 shows a communications infrastructure 25 using IP-based terminals, and

Figure 7 shows another exemplary embodiment.

Figure 1 shows an example of a known private branch exchange 150 with two peripheral devices P1 and P2 to 30 which a communications terminal KE1 and KE2 operating on a digital or analog basis is respectively connected. These peripheral devices P1 and P2 are accommodated in the same physical area as the central device ZE1. By way of example, they are in the same room or in the 35 same cabinet as it. The terminals occupy defined timeslots in the PCM data stream (Pulse Code Modulation) with communication data. The digital or analog communications terminals KE1 and KE2 are respectively connected to subscriber line modules SLMO1

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and SLMO2 which supply or take digital data, intended for the respective terminals or coming from the respective terminals, to/from the PCM data stream using timeslots stipulated by signaling. These PCM data

5 streams are denoted by 100 and 200 in figure 1. In addition, signaling connections are shown which are represented by 110 and 210. It should be noted that these involve only a logical representation and not a physical representation. In reality, however, the
10 transport data and the signaling data are transmitted in the same connecting cable.

This figure also shows peripheral devices P1 and P2 and supply modules LTUC1 and LTUC2 which regulate the data
15 traffic to the subscriber line modules of the respective peripheral devices. The peripheral device P1 is supplied with signaling data via the line 110, and the peripheral device P2 is supplied with signaling data via the signaling line 210.

20 As can clearly be seen here, this arrangement involves both the information to be transported and the signaling information being supplied to a central device ZE1. In this context, a messaging device DCL
25 collects and distributes messages 2 which are interchanged between the central device ZE1 and the peripheral devices P1, P2. The call processing section CP controls the setup and clear-down of connections and, to this end, uses equipment-specific interface
30 functions DH, inter alia, which are in the form of program modules, for example. This involves producing setting instructions 1 for the switching matrix MTS. These setting instructions essentially indicate which input of the switching matrix is to be connected to

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which output in order to provide a communications link. Control and connection functions are thus performed by a single physically incorporated functional unit in the communications network.

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Problems arise with such configurations because all the data to be transported need to be supplied to the central device ZE1. This is the case even if, by way of example, two communications terminals which are connected to the same peripheral device P1 need to communicate with one another. The wiring complexity required for such devices increases with increasing distance between the terminals and the central device ZE1, which means that this type of arrangement restricts the areal extent of a private branch exchange or makes installation much more expensive when covering relatively large areas.

In such devices, problems likewise arise with regard to modular extendibility both in terms of the number of connections and in terms of the volume of data to be transmitted. This type of embodiment does not allow different data rates for each individual communications link.

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Alignment and/or transparent integration of different network infrastructures is likewise not possible.

Figure 2 shows an example of a flexible arrangement for setting up communications links. By way of example, this arrangement illustrates the structure of a private branch exchange 250.

Equivalent reference symbols in figure 2 denote the same elements of the device as in figure 1. Looking at figure 2, it is immediately noticeable that the transport of communication data is triggered by the message traffic of the control messages. To this end, a separate transport network 700 and a separate control

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network 310/410 are provided in this case. This design of an exchange has the advantage that any already existing networks, such as public or private voice and data networks, can be used for the transport network.

5 Only the control network needs to be routed to the central device ZE2 in this case. The use of conversion devices, such as gateways, advantageously makes it possible to operate and control any hybrid configurations.

10

The digital or analog communications terminals KE1 and KE2 are in this case shown such that they are respectively connected to subscriber line modules SLMO1 and SLMO2. Without limiting the invention, however, 15 such an arrangement 250 can also involve and incorporate terminals which can be connected to the transport network 700 directly, with bypassing or without an SLMO. It is also possible to connect ATM terminals or else IP-based (Internet Protocol) 20 terminals. One example of a possible hybrid configuration is shown in figure 5 and is explained in the associated part of the description. Directly connected terminals are shown in figure 6 and are described by the associated part of the description of 25 the figures.

As will also be recognized, the local devices DZ1 and DZ2 each have local switching centers CS1 and CS2 which, by way of example, can be in the form of 30 Ethernet or ATM access devices.

In the case of mixed transport networks, gateways and routers and also media of any type can be connected to one another as required. The illustration likewise shows that the switching matrix MTS0 is no longer used 35 for connection tasks.

Instead, the transport network performs the connection tasks.

In the present arrangement, to this end, the control lines 410 and 310 are used to provide at least one

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respective control information item just for the respective local switching centers CS1 and CS2 for the purposes of setting up the communications link, said control information item being derived from a timeslot-based control information item. The information is interchanged using messages. In addition, the figure shows that PCM data are converted into cell data according to the standard of the transport network type 700, such as ATM cell data, on a data link 300 or 400.

5 In this context, it should be noted that the use of an ATM network as transport network serves only as an exemplary embodiment. Ethernet networks, other IP connections or even TDM connections are likewise suitable. The selection is dependent on the intended purpose of use and extends to the whole range of available networks and also optical media, both in the narrowband range and in the broadband range.

10 If appropriate, various transport networks can be provided; in that case, gateways secure the link between the various network sections.

20

Preferably, the local switching centers CS1 and CS2 perform transport-network-dependent call processing, although this is essentially limited to a basic call functionality. Service features are implemented and provided by the central control mechanism ZE2. Connections between the different local devices are controlled by the central device ZE2 using signaling messages. The advantages of this arrangement are that it has both narrowband capability and broadband capability. It allows the integration of any network types and topologies. In addition, the transport network can be set up both on public networks and on private networks, or else can comprise a mixture. It is advantageously possible for local devices at a distance without physical limitation to be associated with the central device ZE2, so that powerful devices with a large physical extent can also be provided by such a private branch exchange. The retention of a joint

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control mechanism means that it is possible to continue to use already existing software with minimal changes. One advantage of such a device 250 over a networked system comprising devices 150 is that the distributed 5 system is a single installation (which is why it is likewise possible to operate service features and applications which are implemented only on an installation-wide basis), because it presents itself as a single installation from an application point of view. This removes the need for conversion of these 10 methods in order to allow them to operate on a network.

Figure 3 shows, in simplified form, an example of a message flow for connection control in a conventional 15 communications system for setting up a connection between two peripheral devices to which the terminal of a subscriber A, TLNA, and the terminal of a subscriber B, TLNB, are connected. The time sequence for the messages, or control messages, is shown from top to 20 bottom. First, the subscriber A goes off-hook and generates the signaling information OFF HOOK. Next, the communication party required is dialed by entering selection information which is forwarded by an equipment-specific interface module DH to the call 25 processing section CP for the subscriber A.

The selection code analysis WABE for the selection information results in a message SEIZURE being forwarded to the call processing section CP for the 30 subscriber B. An equipment-specific interface module DH which is responsible at that point assigns the connection an explicit timeslot, for example ZS1, for a defined PCM data link, for example PD1, and generates the control message TSL_ASSIGN for the subscriber line 35 module SLMO1. This control message sends the subscriber line module SLMO1 the explicit timeslot ZS1 and the stipulated PCM data link PD1 which are to be used for the connection. The explicit timeslot ZS1 for the PCM data link PD1 transports communication data on the

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connection element between subscriber line module SLMO1 and MTS. A second explicit timeslot ZS2 for a second explicitly stipulated PCM data link PD2 is needed for the connection element between MTS and subscriber line 5 module SLMO2. The control information ZS2 and PD2 is communicated to the subscriber line module SLMO2, again using a control message TSL ASSIGN.

For physically connecting individual subscribers, TDM-based 10 private branch exchanges use a TDM switching matrix MTS. For this switching matrix, a setting instruction PATH_CONNECT1 is transmitted which causes the timeslot ZS1 for PCM data link PD1 to be connected to the timeslot ZS2 for the PCM data link PD2. This 15 means that the two connection elements are connected to form a continuous link between SLMO1 and SLMO2.

To carry out the method, it does not matter whether CP and DH are part of the control software and whether 20 they are in the form of individual modules or in integrated form.

Figure 4 shows, in simplified form, an example of a message flow between two local devices, for the 25 purposes of connection control. Connected to these devices are the terminal of a subscriber A, TLNA, and the terminal of a subscriber B, TLNB. The transport network used in this case is, by way of example, an ATM network. The time sequence for the messages is again 30 shown from top to bottom.

A functional unit STMA, as gateway, converts the timeslots for the PCM data stream into a cell stream of ATM cells. In the exemplary embodiment shown in figure 2, the conversion device is respectively incorporated 35 in the local switching center CS1 or CS2 and is therefore not shown separately.

The message flow differs from the flow shown in figure 3 only after the point at which the setting instruction

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PATH_CONNECT1 is transmitted for the TDM switching matrix. Instead of a setting instruction PATH_CONNECT1, this embodiment involves the generation of a control message PATH_CONN2 which is sent to the local switching centers. These then set up a connection in the transport network. When an ATM transport network is used, an ATMSVC is set up (ATM Switched Virtual Connection), for example using stipulated ATM signaling methods.

To this end, the control message PATH_CONN2 needs to contain the timeslot information and data link information ZS and PD, which can be taken directly from the setting message PATH_CONNECT1, for example. In addition, the central control device needs to indicate just the transport-network-dependent address of the local switching center to which the connection is to be set up. That is to say that the data which need to be provided for the central control mechanism as information relating to the transport network are limited to the transport-network-dependent addresses for the respective local switching centers. The central control device again ascertains the necessary addresses from the timeslot information and data link information ZS and PD. Association tables in a central database DB control the mapping of timeslot/data link to local switching center.

This principle is also suitable for controlling heterogeneous transport networks. It may be necessary additionally to store the network type and the available gateway at the same time.

The control message PATH_CONN2 can also contain other information, and this can also be generated in a plurality of more specific forms. If connections having different bandwidths need to be set up, it can contain

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information about the required bandwidth. Alternatively, the bandwidth information can also be interchanged directly between subscriber line module and switching center.

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When the local switching centers have set up a connection in the transport network 700 after receiving the PATH_CONN2 message, said connection is used to transmit the user data. The user data stream on the data link 300/400 between subscriber line module and local device DZ is assigned to a connection between DZ1 and DZ2 by mapping timeslot indication ZS and PD for the connection identifier for the connection. This means that, despite the possibly complicated flows when setting up a connection via the transport network, the central control mechanism ZE2 need forward only these addresses to the call processing section of the transport network in order to set up a connection there. The rest is handled by the transport-network-specific call processing section.

On the basis of this message flow, the PATH_CONNECT instruction is thus replaced by transport-network-specific call processing. To be able to connect TDM-based subscribers independently of transport network using local switching centers, it is necessary to convert timeslots into transport units. This is done in a conversion unit, such as STMA, of which there is at least one, preferably looped into the path of the user data, for each local device. For this purpose, an ATM-PCM gateway, an IP-PCM gateway or another required gateway can be provided.

However, the method described is not limited to dialup connections which are set up dynamically, but can also be used for an ATMPVC (ATMPVC Permanent virtual connection). The information relating to the address may then need to be complemented by information which regulates the use of permanent connections. In

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addition, other forms of data transmission can also be used, such as IP connections or FDDI (Fiber Distributed Data Interface), etc.

5 Figure 5 shows as an exemplary embodiment a communications arrangement in which local devices DZ are connected to one another by a heterogeneous transport network, the connections in this transport network being distinguished in that connection elements
10 are produced using different communications media or by handling different communications protocols on these connection elements.

Like the arrangement shown and described in figure 2,
15 this mixed communications system is also controlled by a central control device, with control messages being transmitted by the central control mechanism and being sent to the local switching centers CS in order to set up a connection and to sustain or clear down the
20 connection. In this case too, message interchange is effected via a control network, although this control network is not shown to preserve the clarity of the illustration. The reference symbols in the figure can be interpreted in the same way as the reference symbols
25 in the description of the other figures. Unless explicitly mentioned otherwise, functional elements with the same name in the figure also have the same scope of functions in this case.

30 Specifically, the figure shows local devices DZ10 to DZ40 which have subscriber line modules for communications terminals SLMD10 to SLMD40 (not shown). In addition, conversion devices U are provided in the respective local devices DZ, which carry out media
35 alignment or protocol alignment among the different connection element links.

In addition, local switching centers CS10 to CS40 are shown. The conversion devices and the subscriber line

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modules SLMD have TDM data links 301 to 304 between them. Specifically, the local devices DZ have the connection element links 71030, 72030, 72040 and 73020 between them. The connections 72040 and 73020 are, by 5 way of example, transport network connection elements based on an ATM network. On the connections 72030 and 71030 shown, the communications protocol used is the Internet Protocol.

10 The Internet Protocol IP can be used both on an ATM connection and on an Ethernet connection. On the basis of the ISO/OSI (Open Systems Interconnect) protocol standard, the upper layers of a communications protocol can be used on different media. Specifically, this 15 standardized protocol comprises seven layers, with the bottommost layer being the physical layer, the second layer being the data link layer, the third layer being the network layer, the fourth layer being the transport layer, the fifth layer being the session layer, the 20 sixth layer being the presentation layer and the seventh layer being the application layer. In the case of this layer protocol standardized on the basis of ISO IS8802, each layer uses the services of the layer below it. Messages, for example in the form of control 25 messages, which are transmitted using this layer protocol thus progressively receive an additional information item per layer, which produces a data structure in which the original messages have seven layer-specific information elements added to them. 30 Within the context of this communications protocol, any communications media and any layers can thus be coupled to one another.

The conversion devices U are necessary in order to 35 match the different layer structures to one another. By way of example, the conversion device U20 converts ATM cell data into TDM data. These ATM cell data can then be forwarded directly as ATM cell data, for example in the local device DZ20 via the local switching center

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CS20 and via the connection element link 73020.

However, it is likewise possible to forward them to a conversion device U2030 which is in the form of an ATM/IP gateway, for example. There, ATM cell data are conditioned for the Internet Protocol and can then be forwarded via the connection elements 72030 to the local switching center CS30 for the local device DZ 30. The remarkable aspect of this configuration is thus that terminals on the local device DZ20 can communicate with terminals on the local device DZ30 using the Internet Protocol and can also be reached directly on the basis of the asynchronous transfer mode.

To be able to actuate the different connection element links 72030 and 73020, a central control device thus requires appropriate complementary control information for control messages for controlling connection setup between communications subscribers, said control information relating to the type of connection path and protocol-specific information, i.e. gateways to be used.

The conversion device U2030 in the local device DZ30 is in the form of an ATM/IP gateway, for example. The local switching center CS30 is, by way of example, an IP router or switch, while U30 is in the form of an TDM/IP gateway. Similarly, the local switching center CS10 for the local device DZ10 is in the form of an IP router/switch, while the conversion device U1030 is in the form of a TDM/IP gateway.

The local device DZ40 likewise contains a local switching center CS40 in the form of an ATM switching section connected to a conversion device U40 which converts TDM data into ATM cell data.

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information for the control mechanism about the reachability of the individual subscribers using particular gateways and about particular conversion devices and switching centers, and also the associated local devices thereof, is stored in a central control device's data store, for example.

This centrally stored information can either be distributed to the local units and can thus be the basis for a separate decision by the local units about communications protocols to be used and usable transport media when a connection is set up, or the decision is made in the central station and is communicated to the local device.

On the basis of the control information in this database, an appropriate number of control messages are produced for one or more respective connection elements, such as from DZ40 to DZ10, via the connection elements 72040 and 71030, said control messages being transmitted to the respective local switching centers in order to control connection setup, for example.

The connection variants shown here naturally represent only some of the technically possible variants of connection element links, communications media, communications protocols and conversion devices to which the invention can be applied without restriction, which cannot all be listed.

By way of example, it is likewise possible for local data stores to be provided in the area of local devices DZ, the stock of information in said data stores being limited only to devices which are present in the respective local devices DZ. For the case of connection control, although the central control mechanism then needs to request this information first, such configurations have the advantage that local devices

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can also be serviced and maintained locally. There is also redundancy in the data storage and better availability of the communications devices, because the failure of a local data store does not affect the 5 entire network.

By way of example, it is likewise possible for the area of local devices DZ to receive data from the central station whose stock of information is limited to the 10 partner devices of local devices.

For the case of connection control, the local device can then make an independent decision about the use¹ of the correct gateways.

15 A particular advantage of a communications arrangement as shown is that any infrastructures can be matched to one another, and that the specifically directed controllability of the connection element links and of the conversion devices required allows resource-saving 20 connection setup in which unnecessary conversion steps for protocol or media alignment can be avoided in the best way.

Similarly, transport networks of any heterogeneity can 25 be controlled by any central control device without complex technical developments in terms of alignment, because transport-network-specific call processing can advantageously be used which is based on information produced by a TDM-based control mechanism.

30 The specific way in which this can be done has already been described in the explanation of figure 4. The data storage required in such an arrangement can be limited to a minimum degree, because only the transport- 35 network-specific data additionally need to be stored. Similarly, such a communications device brings the advantages of a single private branch exchange to bear, such as the central availability of service features, the central administrability and a central application

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interface. Advantageously, a plurality of different, possibly already existing, network sections thus produce a standard communications system which has the outward appearance of a single installation but which 5 can be flexibly matched to the technical requirements of the customer by virtue of the choice of conversion devices.

Figure 6 shows a particularly advantageous 10 communications arrangement with communications terminals KE10 to KE40 which are connected via an Ethernet and are controlled from a central device ZE 100 via a control network STN. In this case, the connection can be set up both via an Ethernet and via 15 an ATM network, and/or using a hybrid configuration of the transport network. In this embodiment of an arrangement, the devices required for producing, for setting up, for clearing down and for sustaining 20 communications links, which were also contained in a local device DZ in the description for figure 5, have all been incorporated in one communications terminal KE. The number and selection of available components per terminal depends on the type of communications 25 protocols used and on the communications media which are available.

Such an arrangement provides the option of connecting telephone subscribers to TDM subscribers using the Internet Protocol. In this case, the central control 30 mechanism carries out call processing for the TDM subscribers. As regards the IP telephone subscribers, the functionality of their devices needs to be extended, for example, so that they can provide the scope of functions standardized on the basis of ITU 35 protocols H.323 and H.450. This can advantageously be done by virtue of the equipment-specific alignment modules DH being equipped with the functions of the H.323 and H.450 protocols for the purposes of actuating IP subscribers. This variant arrangement is

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particularly advantageous because telephony based on the Internet Protocol can easily be linked to TDM-based telephony. The development complexity for matching the central control device ZE100 to the communications terminals KE is minimal in this context and requires only the development of a specific software module DH.

The local switching centers for the communications terminals KE exist, by way of example, in the form of network driver cards for the Ethernet. A clear relationship between Internet addresses (IP addresses) and the connection features of a TDM connection can be produced by assigning an IP address precisely one local device having a subscriber line module and a subscriber line, for example, which device can in turn be reached via precisely one TDM data path. The local device, the subscriber line module, the subscriber line and the TDM data path are not physically present in this case, but rather are set up only fictitiously in the software. This makes it possible to continue to use normal control with no great complexity of change. The changes are then for the most part limited to configuration data.

Figure 7 shows a partial view of the illustration from figure 5 in order to explain an advantageous embodiment of a communications arrangement and a specific mode of operation of this arrangement. The reference symbols are used in a similar manner to in the other figures in this case. The fact that this illustration shows only two local devices DZ20 and DZ40 need not mean that such an embodiment of a communications arrangement can be limited to just two local devices. Instead, every local device in a communications arrangement can be equipped with the advantageous refinements which will be discussed below.

In contrast to the illustration in figure 5, this figure shows terminals KE50, KE60, KE70 and KE80. While

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the terminals KE50 to KE70 are connected by means of communication lines 2050 to 2070 to the local device DZ20 and, there, to the subscriber line module SLMD20, the communications terminal KE80 is connected by means 5 of a connecting line 3080 to the module SLMD40 in the local device DZ40. As already explained above, these modules SLMD20 and SLMD40 communicate with the appropriate local switching centers CS20 and CS40 via TDM connections 304 and 302. As has already been 10 described in this context, transport-network-specific call processing is normally carried out for an arrangement as described. This normal case arises, by way of example, when the communications terminal KE80 wishes to communicate via its connecting line 3080, the 15 TDM data link 304, the conversion device U40, the local switching center CS40 and via a transport network link 72040 with one of the communications terminals KE50 to KE70 via the local switching center CS20, the conversion device U20 and the TDM data link 302 and via 20 the subscriber line module SLMD20.

In the case of this specific embodiment, however, it is necessary to prevent a situation where, if 25 communications terminals connected to the same subscriber line module or to the same local device DZ20 communicate with one another via the conversion device U20, because such communications terminals can be connected directly via the TDM data stream by switching their respective timeslots, and converting the TDM data 30 into a transport-network-specific format ties up conversion capacity unnecessarily. Hence, suitable processing when handling a connection between the communications terminals KE50 to KE70 is intended to prevent communications data which are to be 35 interchanged from needing to be converted into a transport-network-specific format, and then back again, using the conversion device U20. For the call processing in such an arrangement, timeslot-related information about the communications subscribers

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involved is required. As complementary information, information about the address of local devices to which these communications terminals are connected is additionally provided for specifically directed
5 connection setup.

In an arrangement of the type illustrated in figure 7, the protocol-specific information analyzed is the address of the local device, and if the addresses of
10 the local devices DZ involved and of the terminals to be connected are identical, i.e. terminals connected to the same local device DZ, conversion of the TDM data is prevented and a direct connection is produced between the terminals. This has the advantage that the
15 conversion device, in this case U20, is available for other conversion procedures, that the transport network is not burdened by such procedures, no charges arise in the transport network and similarly the local switching center can perform other tasks. Hence, in this case,
20 the handling of a connection involves the address of a local device for communications terminals KE affected thereby being checked in a respective local device DZ. Advantageously, if the result of this check is positive, a signal is output to an access chip for the
25 TDM data stream, the task of which is to tap off the timeslots from the TDM data stream, or to pass them to the TDM data stream. Using this signal, this chip, for example, produces a short circuit such that the reading and writing directions of the communications terminals
30 involved are interchanged with one another. This chip may possibly be in the form of a switching matrix.

The addresses can be checked both in the local device and in the central device. In the case of a central
35 check, the local switching center is informed that a short circuit needs to be introduced.

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Patent Claims

1. A method for setting up and/or clearing down and sustaining a communications link, in which

- a communications link between at least two local devices (DZ10-DZ40) is provided in a transport network (71030, 72030, 72040, 73020) by local switching centers (CS10-CS40) associated with the local devices (DZ10-DZ40),
- the setup and/or clear-down of the communications link is controlled by a central control device via a control network (310, 410, STN),
- the connection setup and/or clear-down in the transport network is controlled using at least two control information items,
- a connection information item suitable for defining a timeslot connection via a switching matrix represents a first control information item,
- a protocol information item represents a second control information item and is provided for the central control device and/or for the local devices (DZ10-DZ40) for the purposes of selecting communications protocols to be used and usable transport media.

2. The method as claimed in claim 1,

in which the control information item is complemented by a media information item which relates to the transport network and identifies at least one transport network medium for the communications link.

3. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, for a communications link comprising at least two connection elements (73020, 72030) in the transport network, where each connection element

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uses at least one respective communications protocol whose layer structure differs in at least one layer and in which the control information item is complemented by an information item which identifies a conversion apparatus (U20, U2030, U30, 3020) for the various communications protocols.

4. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, for a communications link comprising at least two connection elements in the transport network, where each connection element uses at least one respective communications protocol whose layer structure differs in at least one layer and in which the control information item is complemented by an information item which identifies a media access device (CS10, Cs30) for a respective communication medium.

5. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, in which an information item is provided centrally for the purposes of complementing the control information item in the area of the central control device (ZE1, ZE2, ZE100).

6. The method as claimed in one of claims 4 to 6, in which an information item is provided locally for the purposes of complementing the control information item and is ascertained at least once by the central control device (ZE1, ZE2, ZE100) in the course of the handling of a communications link (71030, 72030, 73020, 72040).

7. The method as claimed in one of claims 3 to 5, in which connection elements between local devices (DZ10,...,DZ40) in the transport network use the Internet Protocol for transmission, and in which connection control is effected by assigning to an IP address precisely one PCM data-stream subscriber line (KE) and a local device (DZ).

8. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, in which control information is used to check whether connection setup via the transport network (72040) is

necessary, and if not, the connection
is provided elsewhere.

9. The method as claimed in claim 8,
in which the control information item used is at least
one address for a local device (DZ), and if the
communications link relates to communications terminals (KE)
which are connected to the same local device (DZ), a
connection is set up without the communications data being
converted on a transport-network-specific basis.

10. An arrangement for setting up and/or clearing down, and
sustaining, a communications link,

a) which has a transport network (71030, 72030, 72040,
73020) for providing a communications link,
b) which has a control network (310, 410, STN) for
controlling the setup and/or clear-down of the
communications link and which has first means for
controlling the connection setup and/or clear-down in the
transport network via the control network, these means being
arranged with a physical separation from the transport
network, which output at least two control information
items,

and in which the transport network has at least two
local devices (DZ10, DZ20..., DZ40) for outputting and
receiving communications data, and in the area of the local
device has a switching center (CS) for providing a
communications link in the transport network, where at least
one connection element (71030, 72030) of the communications
link is in the form of a connection which uses the Internet
Protocol as communications protocol.

11. The arrangement as claimed in claim 10,
in which the control network (310, 410, STN) has a
central device (ZE) for control purposes and is operatively
connected to second means at least for the purposes of
providing transport-network-

specific protocol information and/or transport network media information.

12. The arrangement as claimed in claim 11,
in which the second means are arranged centrally in the area of the first means.

13. The arrangement as claimed in claim 11,
in which the second means are arranged locally in the area of the local device (DZ).

14. The arrangement as claimed in one of claims 10 to 13,
in which a local device (DZ) has at least one conversion device (U1030, U30) in the form of a gateway for converting a TDM protocol into an IP protocol.

15. The arrangement as claimed in one of claims 10 to 14,
in which the local device has at least one network access device to an Ethernet, in the form of a transceiver.

16. The arrangement as claimed in one of claims 10 to 14,
in which a local device (DZ) has at least first means for address evaluation of addresses for local devices (DZ) which output a first signal when a communications link (2050, 2060, 2070) relates only to a single central device (DZ).

17. The arrangement as claimed in claim 16,
in which the first signal is output to a device for accessing timeslots in the TDM data stream (302) from the local device, and the latter shorts the connection in the TDM data stream (302) in response to the reception of the signal.

18. The arrangement as claimed in claim 17,
in which the connection is shorted by interchanging the reading and writing directions.

19. The arrangement as claimed in one of claims 10 to 15,

in which the local device is in the form of an integrated communications terminal (KE10..., KE40).

20. The arrangement as claimed in claim 19,
in which the integrated communications terminal is in the form of a telephone (KE30).

21. The arrangement as claimed in claim 19,
in which the communications terminal is in the form of a personal computer (KE10, KE20, KE40).

Abstract

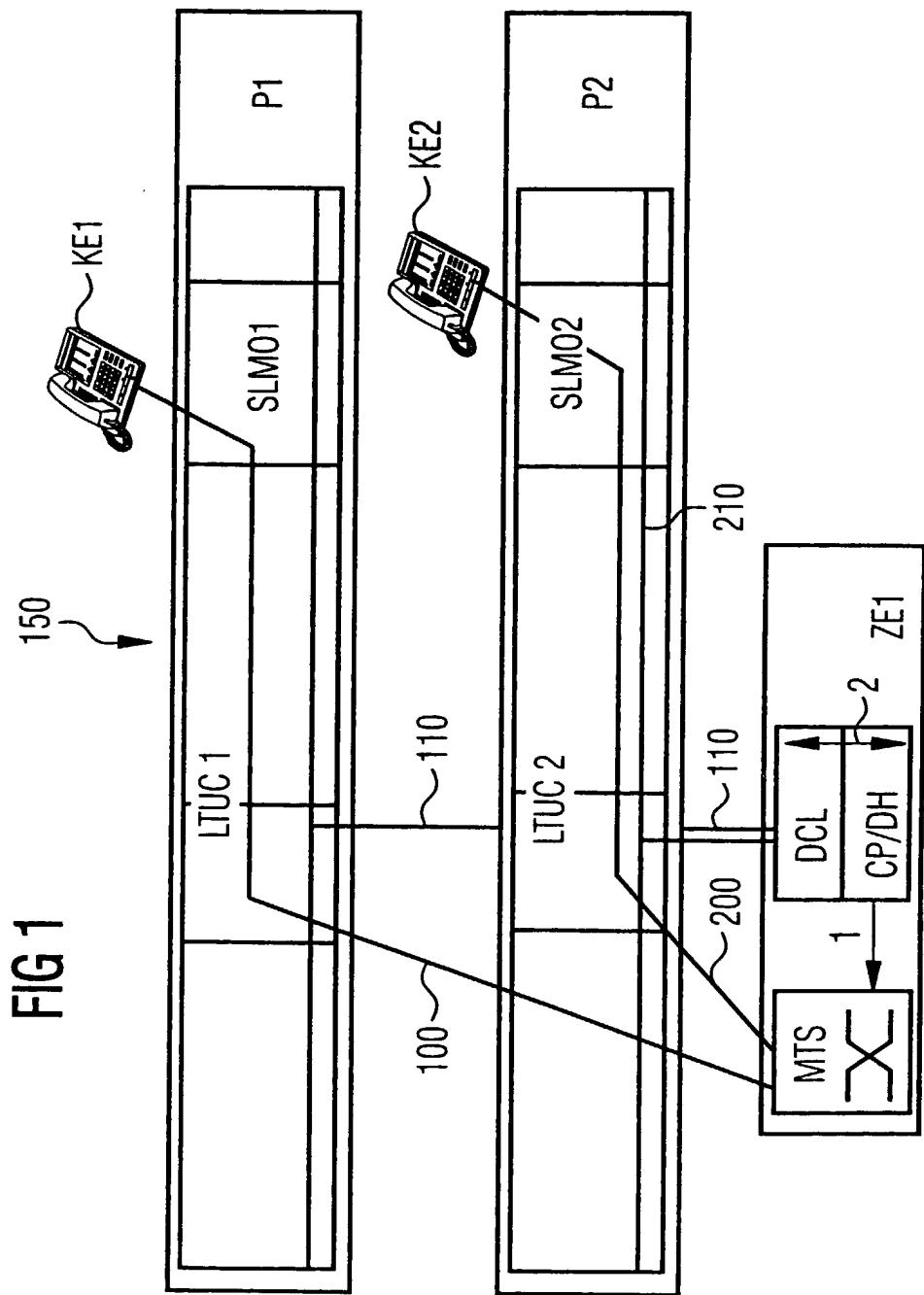
Communications system

The invention describes a method and an arrangement for actuating and operating a heterogeneous transport network which comprises connection elements, such as ATM and Ethernet connections, by controlling a TDM-based switching system. In the area of the transport network, there are gateways and routers which are actuated by the central control device for the purposes of setting up and clearing down a connection. Information relating to the accessibility of specific communications subscribers by means of communication medium and communications protocol is either stored in the area of a central control mechanism or is available locally in the area of local access devices for subscriber terminals.

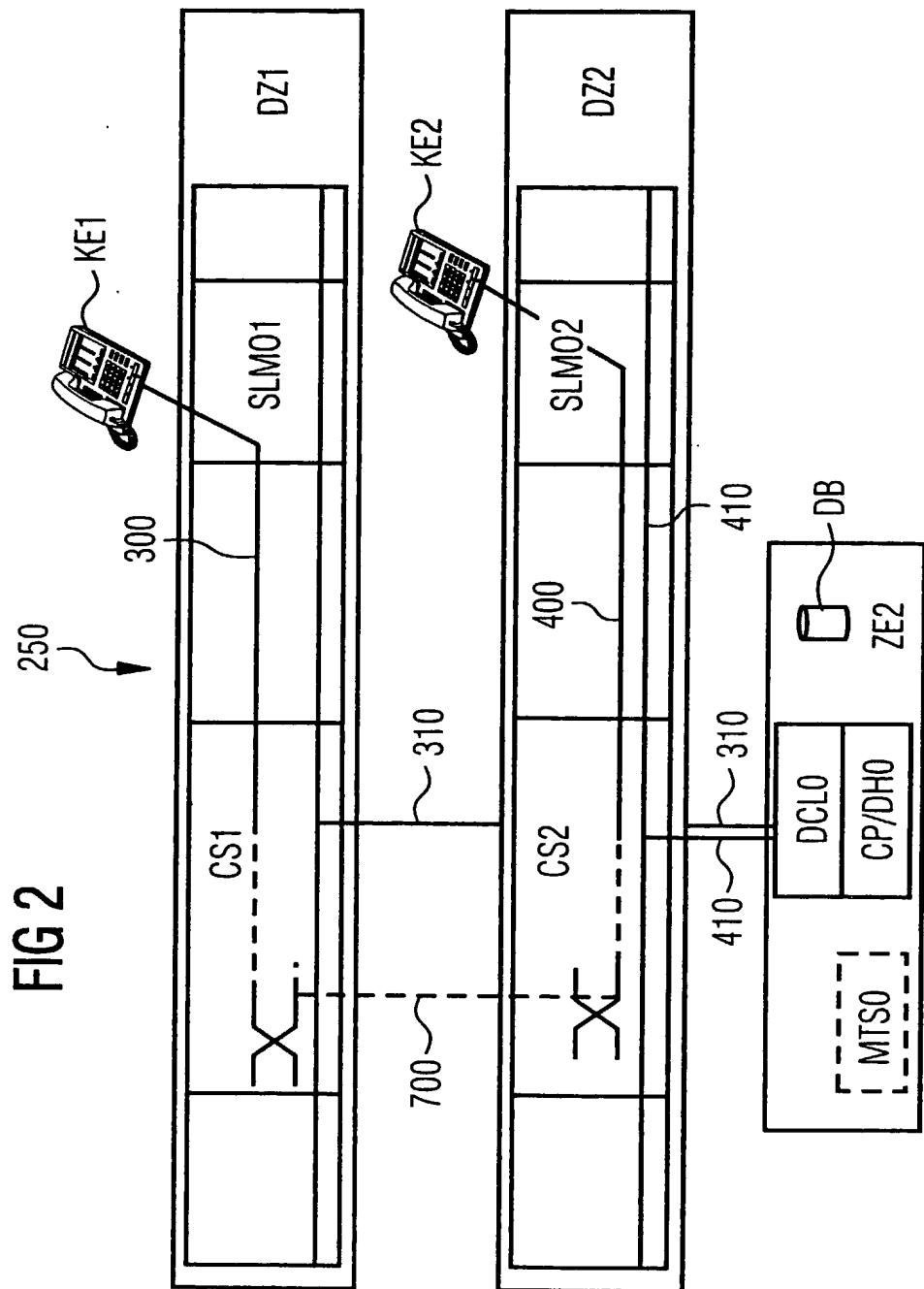
The invention also specifies integrated terminals for Internet telephony which are likewise able to be actuated by means of a TDM-based control mechanism. The invention specifies a simple method and a simple arrangement which allow very heterogeneous communications infrastructures to be provided which have the advantage that they behave like a single private branch exchange and work together with normal control mechanisms. One advantageous refinement produces local connections without burdening transport-network-specific devices.

Figure 5

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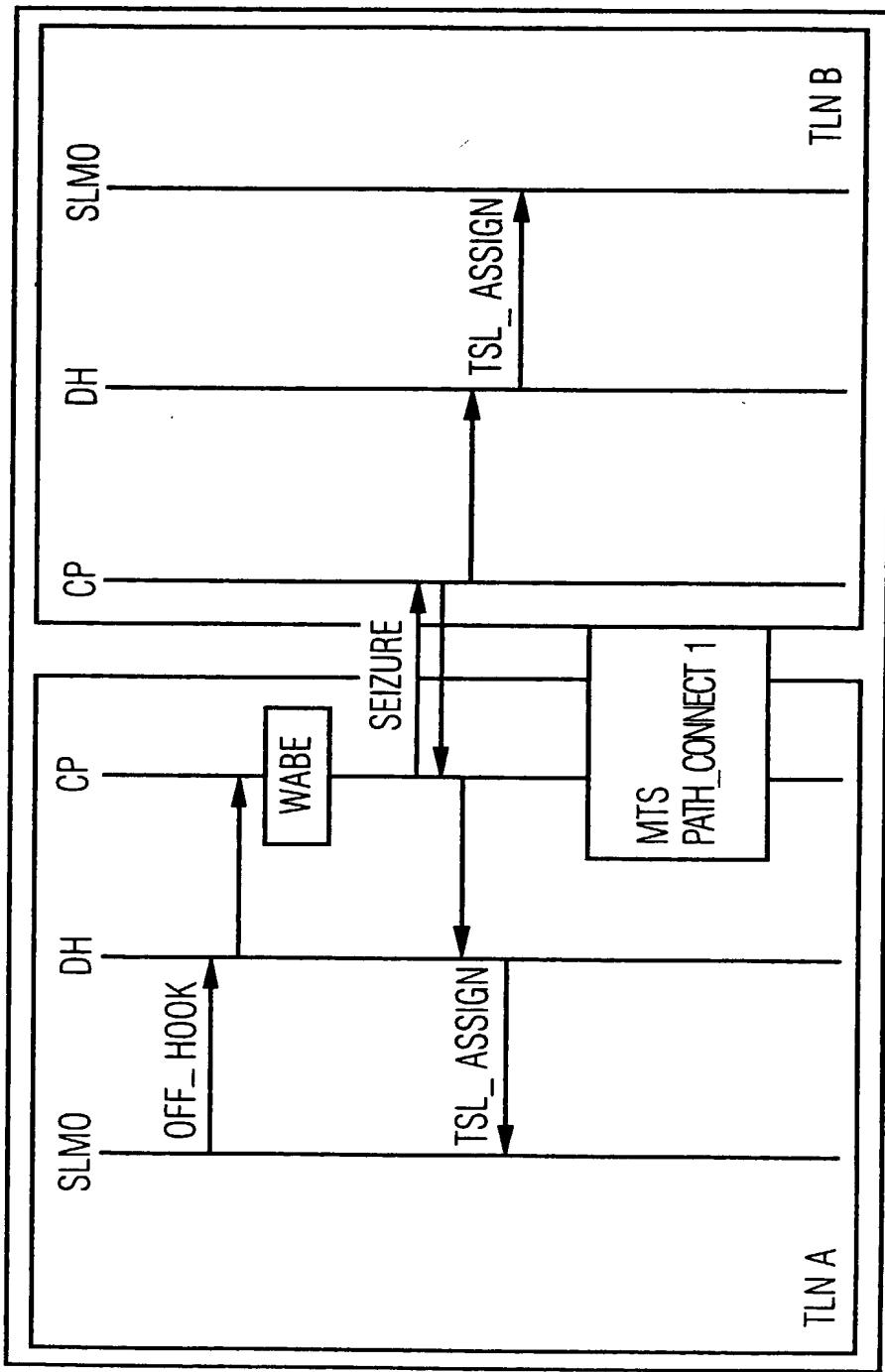


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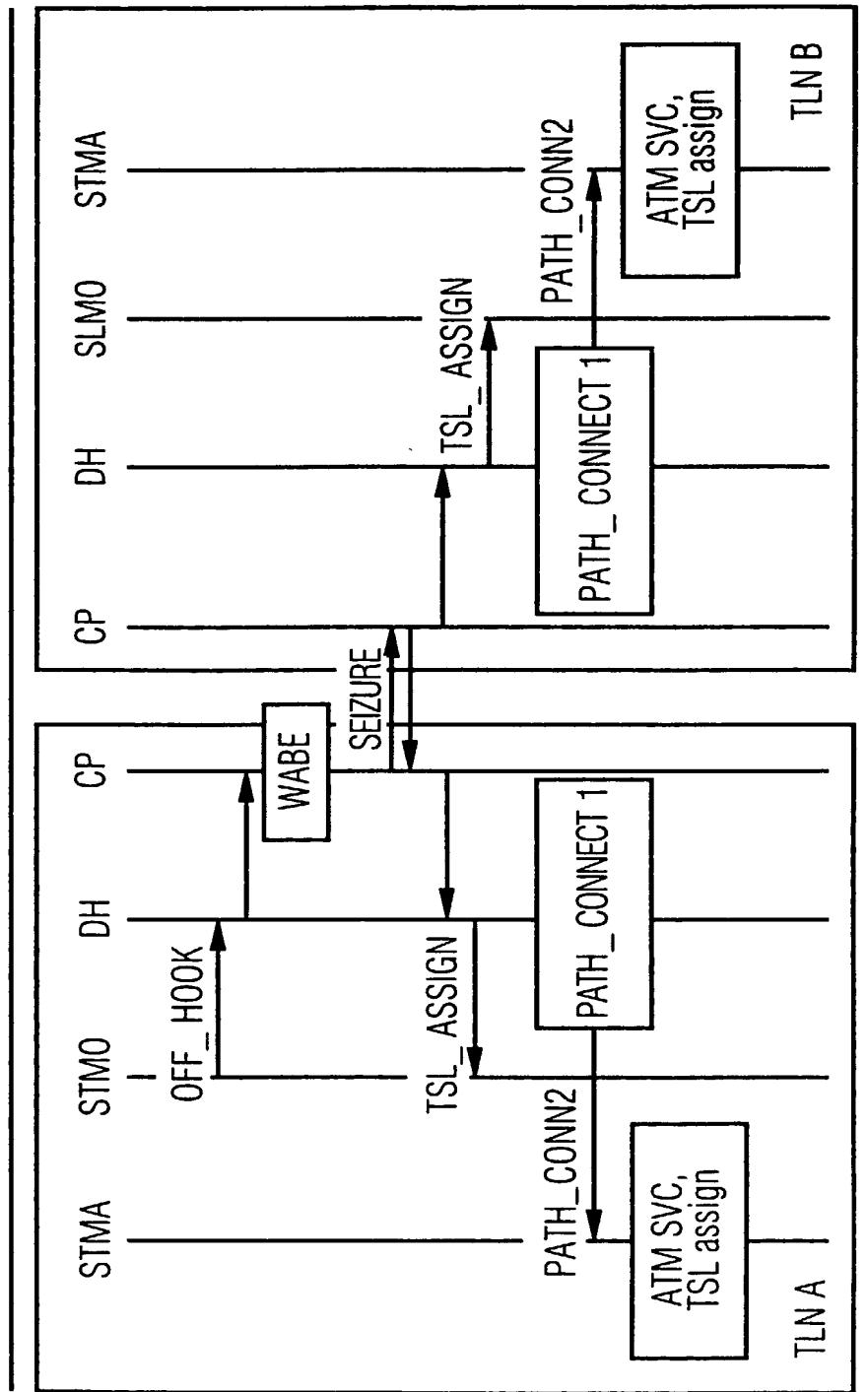
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FIG 3



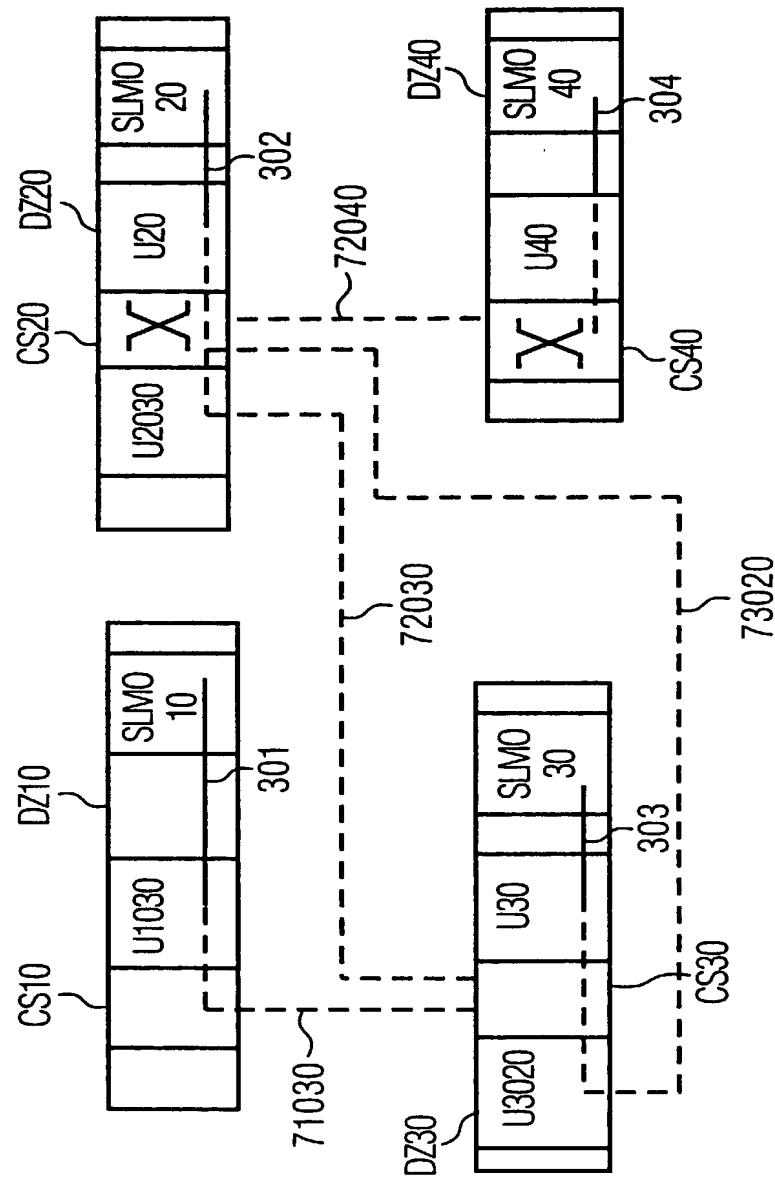
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FIG 4



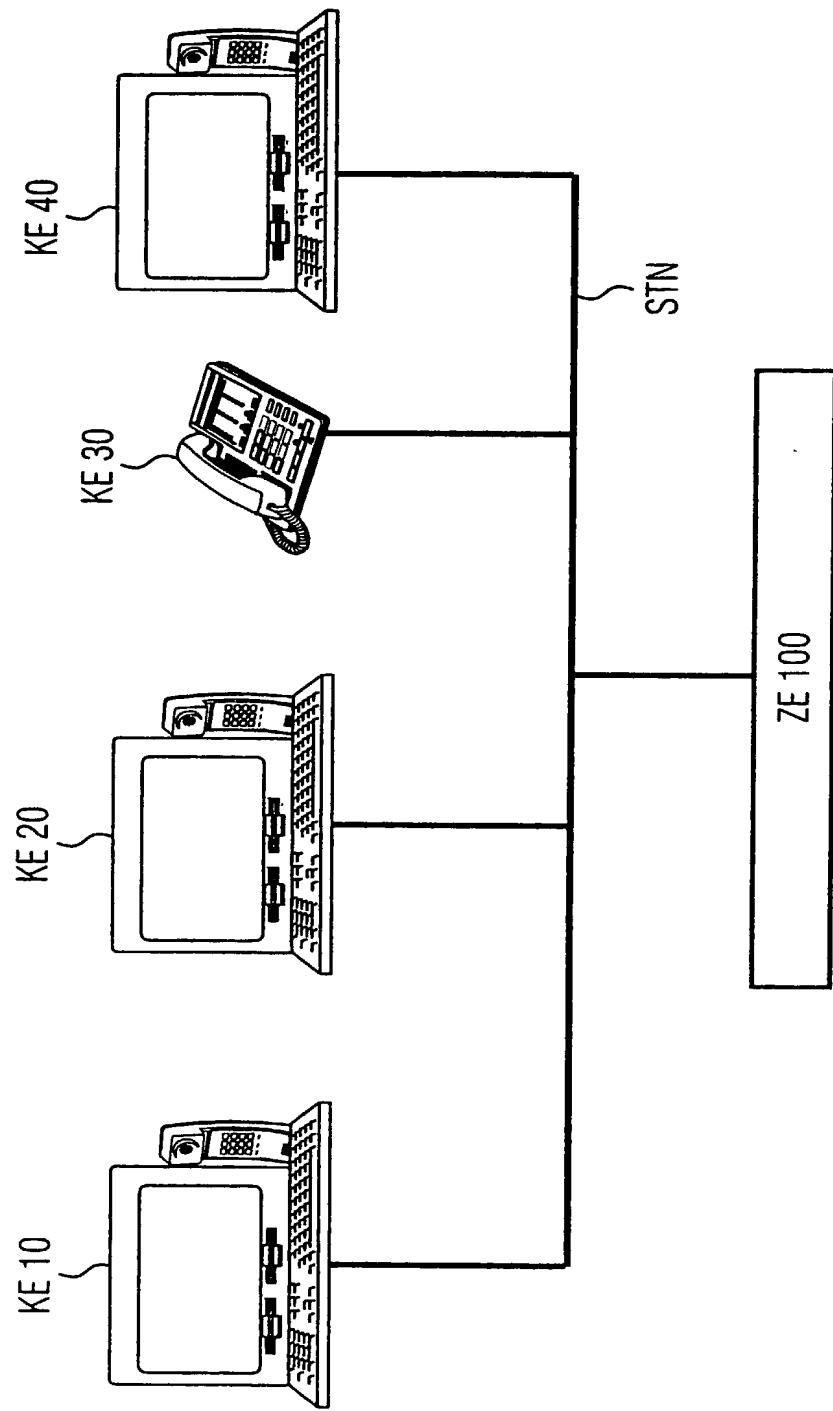
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FIG 5



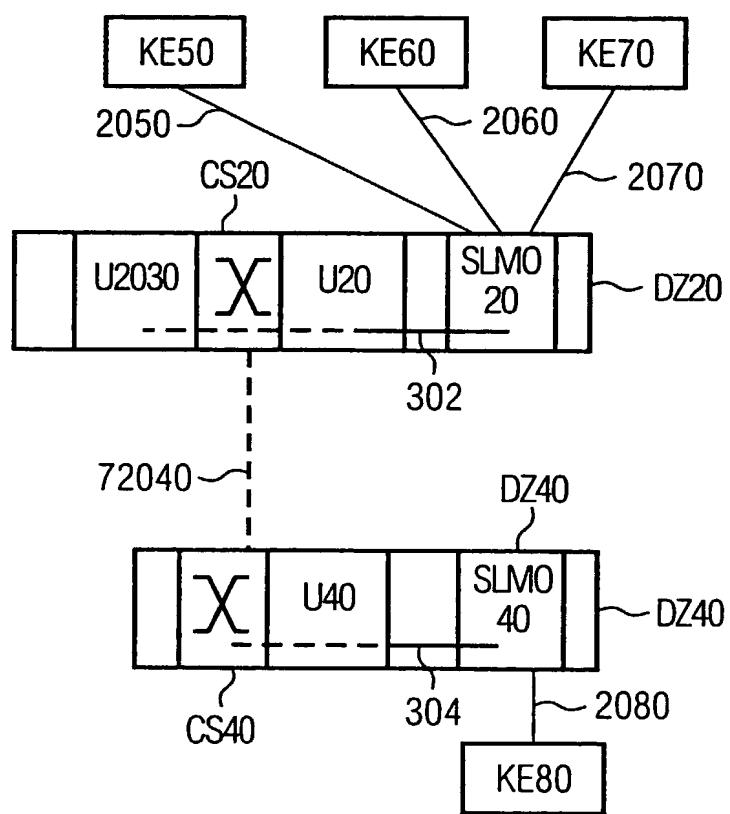
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FIG 6



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FIG 7



Declaration and Power of Attorney For Patent Application
Erklärung Für Patentanmeldungen Mit Vollmacht
 German Language Declaration

Als nachstehend benannter Erfinder erkläre ich hiermit an Eides Statt.

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Kommunikationssystem

deren Beschreibung

(zutreffendes ankreuzen)

hier beigelegt ist

am 14.09.2000 als

PCT internationale Anmeldung

PCT Anmeldungsnummer PCT/DE00/03207

eingereicht wurde und am 26.02.2002

abgeändert wurde (falls tatsächlich abgeändert)

Ich bestätige hiermit, dass ich den Inhalt der obigen Patentanmeldung einschliesslich der Ansprüche durchgesehen und verstanden habe, die eventuell durch einen Zusatzantrag wie oben erwähnt abgeändert wurde

Ich erkenne meine Pflicht zur Offenbarung irgendwelcher Informationen, die für die Prüfung der vorliegenden Anmeldung in Einklang mit Absatz 37, Bundesgesetzbuch, Paragraph 1 56(a) von Wichtigkeit sind, an.

Ich beanspruche hiermit ausländische Prioritätsvorteile gemäss Abschnitt 35 der Zivilprozeßordnung der Vereinigten Staaten, Paragraph 119 aller unten angegebenen Auslandsanmeldungen für ein Patent oder eine Erfindersurkunde, und habe auch alle Auslandsanmeldungen für ein Patent oder eine Erfindersurkunde nachstehend gekennzeichnet, die ein Anmelde datum haben, das vor dem Anmeldedatum der Anmeldung liegt, für die Priorität beansprucht wird

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that.

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name,

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

Communication system

the specification of which

(check one)

is attached hereto.

was filed on 14.09.2000 as

PCT international application

PCT Application No PCT/DE00/03207

and was amended on 26.02.2002

(if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims as amended by any amendment referred to above

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, §119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed

German Language Declaration

Prior foreign applications
Prioritat beansprucht

Priority Claimed

19945154.0	DE	21.09.1999	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes Ja	<input type="checkbox"/> No Nein
(Number)	(Country)	(Day Month Year Filed) (Tag Monat Jahr eingereicht)		
(Nummer)	(Land)			
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes Ja	<input type="checkbox"/> No Nein
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes Ja	<input type="checkbox"/> No Nein
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes Ja	<input type="checkbox"/> No Nein

Ich beanspruche hiermit gemass Absatz 35 der Zivilprozeßordnung der Vereinigten Staaten, Paragraph 120, den Vorzug aller unten aufgeföhrten Anmeldungen und falls der Gegenstand aus jedem Anspruch dieser Anmeldung nicht in einer früheren amerikanischen Patentanmeldung laut dem ersten Paragraphen des Absatzes 35 der Zivilprozeßordnung der Vereinigten Staaten, Paragraph 122 offenbart ist, erkenne ich gemäss Absatz 37, Bundesgesetzbuch, Paragraph 156(a) meine Pflicht zur Offenbarung von Informationen an, die zwischen dem Anmeldedatum der früheren Anmeldung und dem nationalen oder PCT internationalen Anmeldedatum dieser Anmeldung bekannt geworden sind

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code §120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §122, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application

PCT/DE00/03207 (Application Serial No.) (Anmeldeseriennummer)	14.09.2000 (Filing Date D, M, Y) (Anmeldedatum T, M, J)	anhängig (Status) (patentiert, anhängig, aufgegeben)	pending (Status) (patented, pending, abandoned)
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ich erkläre hiermit, dass alle von mir in der vorliegenden Erklärung gemachten Angaben nach meinem besten Wissen und Gewissen der vollen Wahrheit entsprechen, und dass ich diese eidesstattliche Erklärung in Kenntnis dessen abgebe, dass wissentlich und vorsätzlich falsche Angaben gemäss Paragraph 1001, Absatz 18 der Zivilprozeßordnung der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika mit Geldstrafe belegt und/oder Gefängnis bestraft werden können, und dass derartig wissentlich und vorsätzlich falsche Angaben die Gültigkeit der vorliegenden Patentanmeldung oder eines darauf erteilten Patentes gefährden können

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POWER OF ATTORNEY. As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith. (*list name and registration number*)

And I hereby appoint

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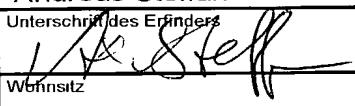
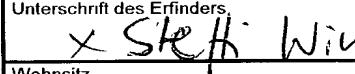
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Staatsangehörigkeit DE		Citizenship
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Voller Name des sechsten Miterfinders		Full name of sixth joint inventor
Unterschrift des Erfinders	Datum	Inventor's signature Date
Wohnsitz		Residence
Staatsangehörigkeit		Citizenship
Postanschrift		Post Office Address

(Bitte entsprechende Informationen und Unterschriften im Falle von dritten und weiteren Miterfindern angeben)

(Supply similar information and signature for third and subsequent joint inventors).